

THE
DISCIPLINE

PRACTISED IN THE
Churches of New England:

CONTAINING

I. A PLATFORM OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

II. THE PRINCIPLES OWNED, AND THE ENDEAVOURS USED, BY THE CHURCHES OF NEW ENGLAND, CONCERNING THE CHURCH-STATE OF THEIR POSTERITY.

III. HEADS OF AGREEMENT ASSENTED TO BY THE UNITED MINISTERS, FORMERLY CALLED PRESBYTERIAN AND CONGREGATIONAL.

(From *Magnalia Christi Americana*, by Cotton Mather, D. D.)

Whitchurch:

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IN SENATE

JANUARY 18, 1891

REPORT OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE SENATE

PASSED MAY 18, 1890

PREFACE

TO THIS EDITION.

That part of North America, called New England, was discovered in 1497, by John Cabot, a Venetian, while on a voyage of discovery, for the benefit of the British nation, under commission from Henry VII. It was afterwards visited by several other navigators: but the first attempt to form a settlement there, was not made till 1607. The colonists chose for their residence, the east side of the mouth of the Kennebeck river, in Parker's island. Such, however, were their sufferings, that they were obliged to return the following year; and other commercial adventurers, were hereby discouraged from making the attempt.

New England, was reserved as an asylum for the persecuted; and the honour of planting it, for the exiled advocates of civil and religious liberty. The bigotry and despotism, which characterized the reign of James I. caused innumerable oppressions to the stigmatized Puritans. But penal enactments were not likely to suppress them. Papal tyranny gave being to the Reformation; and fines, imprisonments, and tortures, became the excitements to Nonconformity. Many families, chiefly of the Brownists, or strict Independents, with difficulty, escaped from their persecutors to the Netherlands. Among the ministers who fled thither, was the celebrated Mr. John Robinson; educated at Cambridge, and benefited near Yarmouth. Part of his flock followed him to Amsterdam in 1608, and the year following, to Leyden; where he pursued that simple, pure, and scriptural discipline, that had rendered him obnox-

ous in his native land ; and organized a flourishing Congregational church. *

Constant accessions to this church, were gained from England. At one time it consisted of 300 communicants. The testimonies to their order, and purity, are highly honourable. "Perhaps this church, approached as near the pattern of apostolic churches, as any since the first ages of christianity ; and this has been its general character to the present time. The integrity and piety of its members, procured them esteem and confidence in a land of strangers. Though many of them were poor, when they wanted to borrow money, the Dutch would readily take their word, because they always found them punctual to fulfil their engagements. They saw them incessantly laborious in their callings, and therefore preferred them as customers: they found them honest, and therefore gave the preference to their work." † To this may be added, the testimony of the magistrates of Leyden, who in reproofing the Walloons, or French church, say, "These English, have lived now ten years among us, and yet we never had any accusation against any one of them: whereas your quarrels are continual." ‡

In their own land these excellent people had forsaken all for religion; and as they now dwelt among

* Mr. Henry Jacob, had retired to Holland, in consequence of the severe measures of the Court, in 1593; and about six years after, formed a church among the English exiles, at Middlebourg. While pastor of this church, in 1604, he published a work, in which he declared, "That for 200 years after Christ, the churches were not Diocesan, but Congregational." Mr. Jacob returned to London, in 1616, and organized the first Congregational church in England.

Brook's Lives, Art. Henry Jacob. Neal's Puritans.

† Morse and Parish's New-England. p. 9.

‡ Cotton Mather's History. B. 1. p. 6.

strangers, where the numerous population engrossed every department of commerce, their situation was by no means favourable to the acquisition of property. Added to this, was a still greater evil. They saw their children intermarrying with foreigners, and imbibing a worldly spirit, accompanied with a lax observance of the sabbath; and viewed it as contagious. For these reasons, a removal seemed necessary. The shores of America, were far distant, and inhospitable; but to these exiles, they nevertheless seemed inviting, as they might there enjoy civil and religious freedom. After much deliberation, self-abasement, and prayer, part of the church resolved to transplant themselves to America: Mr. Robinson and the rest, promising to follow, should the removal prove favourable. Accordingly, those among them who had possessions, sold them, making a common stock, and purchased a small vessel of 60 tons burden, and hired another of 180 tons in England. The agents, Mr. John Carver and Mr. Robert Cushman, while in England, with much trouble and expense also procured a patent from the Virginia company, and an assurance of protection from the government; but never used either. While the larger vessel, under direction of the agents, was furnishing with stores for the new plantation, the company was preparing for embarkation in Holland; purposing to join the rest of their friends who might go from England, at Southampton; and thence sail for the western continent. A day of solemn fasting and prayer was kept by the church, on which occasion their excellent pastor delivered a most suitable and impressive discourse, from Ezra 8. 21. *I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict our souls before God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.* The highly sensible and appropriate remarks, with which he closed on this truly affecting occa-

sion, are as follow: "Brethren, we are now quickly to part from one another, and whether I may ever live to see your faces again on earth, the God of heaven only knows. But whether the Lord have appointed that or no, I charge you before God, and before his blessed angels, that you follow me no farther, than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If God reveal any thing to you, by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it, as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am verily persuaded, I am very confident, the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word.

"For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the Reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will at present go no farther than the instruments of their first reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw: whatever part of his will our good God has revealed unto Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. And the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God; who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God: and were they now living, they would be as willing to embrace farther light, as that which they first received. I beseech you, to remember it is an article of your church-covenant, That you will be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known unto you, from the written word of God. Remember that, and every other article of your most sacred covenant. But I must, herewithal, exhort you to take heed what you receive as truth. Examine it, consider it, and compare it with the other scriptures of truth, before you receive it. For it is not possible, the christian world should come so lately out of such thick antichristian darkness, and that perfection

of knowledge should break forth at once. I must also advise you to abandon, avoid, and shake off the name of Brownists. It is a mere nick name, and a brand for making of religion, and the professors of religion, odious to the christian world. Unto this end, I should be extremely glad, if some godly minister would go with you, or come to you, before you can have any company. For there will be no difference between the Unconformable ministers of England and you, when you come to the practice of evangelical ordinances, out of the kingdom."

They then continued the whole night in prayer. The next morning, Mr. Robinson and many friends accompanied them from Leyden to Delft Haven, the place of embarkation. On this mournful occasion (July 2nd 1620.) these christian adventurers, in number a hundred and one, set sail, after 11 years exile; the pastor kneeling on the sea shore, and praying for their safety, in accents broken only by the overflowings of his heart, or the sobs of bereaved relatives.*

During the few days they lay in Southampton harbour, waiting the readiness of the other vessel, they received from Mr. Robinson, a pastoral letter, containing much excellent advice, and assurances of his continued supplications for their prosperity. All things being in readiness, both vessels sailed. They had not, however, proceeded far, when the vessel in which they had come from Holland, was found to be leaky. This occasioned them to put into Plymouth, where the vessel was pronounced unfit for the voyage. Some of the company were, in consequence, obliged to relinquish the adventure, for the present; among whom was Mr. Cushman and family; the greater number re-embarking in the other vessel. Thus, this little band was reduced to the necessity of risking their lives with their all, alone to steer their

* Cotton Mather, B. 1. Ch. 2, & 3. Brook's Lives, Art J. Robinson.

course to shores far distant, and to them unknown. But piety was their motive, and God their protector. Man purposes, but He provides. They set sail for Hudson's river, but the Dutch had secretly hired the master of the ship, to conduct them to New England! Their journey was distressing, but at length they anchored at Cape Cod, since called the harbour of Provincetown, Nov. 10th 1620., not one having died on the passage. †

While they lay at anchor here, they formed themselves into a political body, choosing for their governor, Mr. John Carver. Some of their number were then deputed to explore the country, and seek a place of residence; a small party undertaking to pursue these objects, by following the windings of the coast. These spies in a few days returned, not bringing with them of the grapes, pomegranates, and figs; but a few remaining ears of Indian corn; which, however, providentially furnished some seed for the next year. They had seen too, several savages in the woods; and though they fled before them, the adventurers feared it might not be thus, when these could collect sufficient forces for hostility. Such a report, caused as much terror to this little company, as did that of the children of Anak, being in the land, to Israel. A little boat was then constructed, and another party sent across the water. These also returned with no better success. A third, and larger company, however, succeeded in fixing on a spot for the colony; and thither the vessel was steered, after a month spent in waiting at Cape Cod. The first labours of the company, after landing, were directed to providing a shelter from the piercing cold of winter, now far advanced. They named the place New-Plymouth: on Dec. 31st, they kept the first sabbath there.

† Dwight's Travels, Vol. I. Let. X. Cotton Mather, B. 1. Ch. 2.

Six of their number had died in December, and forty six more fell a sacrifice to death, during the succeeding months of winter: most of the survivors were exceedingly ill. One circumstance is very remarkable. As the colonists became better acquainted with the country around them, they learned that it had been almost entirely depopulated, by an epidemic disease, a little time before they arrived. Massasoit, chief Sachem of the Wampanoangs (the tribe of Indians so reduced by disease) fearing the combined power of the other tribes, came to New-Plymouth, and entered into a treaty with the colonists, both offensive and defensive. To this he was led, by hearing a favourable account of the English, from one of his people, who had been kidnapped and taken to Spain, and being afterwards conveyed to London, he had thence obtained a passage back to America.*

By patent from James I. (Nov. 3d, 1620.) the duke of Lenox and some others, were constituted "The council, established at Plymouth, in the county of Devon, for the planting, ruling, ordering, and governing of New England in America." By this council, grants of land were made to different commercial adventurers; while many Puritans were induced to seek by these means, a refuge from the inhuman proceedings of the courts of High Commission and Star Chamber.

Mr. Thomas Weston, a London Merchant, obtained a grant of land in 1622, and sent some persons to begin a settlement, near New-Plymouth (since called Weymouth). But it was broken up the same year, through the dissolute conduct of the colonists, who provoked the Indians, and were near falling a prey to their resentment. From the same council, the co-

* Dwight's Travels, Vol. I. Let. X.
B. I. Ch. 2.

Cotton Mather,

lony at New-Plymouth procured a patent in 1623, and a subsequent one in 1630. † Mr. John Carver, governor for the first year, died 1621. After him, Mr. Bradford was chosen, and re-elected to that office every year till his death, in 1657.

The premature death of Mr. Robinson, at Leyden, prevented them from being joined by that great and good man. This happened, March 1, 1625; and in the 50th year of his age. ‡ Most of the church afterwards went from Leyden, to join the rest of their number in New-England. Among these were Mr. Robinson's widow and children.

Besides these additions to their own number, they saw other stations around them, occupied by those, who like them, left their native land for liberty of conscience; and hailed them as welcome neighbours. A small colony was settled at Naumkeag (named Salem) in 1628, where Mr. Francis Higginson became pastor. The year following, one of about two hundred persons was settled at Mishawum (Charleston). †

Mr. William Brewster, ruling-elder in the church at Leyden, during the twelve years exile there, was the only spiritual instructor of the church at New-Plymouth, for eight years after their arrival. He proved himself admirably calculated to feed and direct this little flock; but modestly relinquished the charge on Mr. Ralph Smith becoming their pastor, in 1629. §

Above 1500 persons, in seventeen vessels, came over in 1630, under direction of John Winthrop, Esq. governor, and planted themselves at Shawmut (Boston) and places adjacent. Five years after, a settlement was effected at Windsor; another at Hartford, where the famous Mr. Thomas Hooker became minister; and another at Watertown. †

In company with the latter, 1633, came from Boston, in Lincoln. the very celebrated and learned John

† Dwight's Travels, Vol. I. Let. X. ‡ On the 27th of the same month, died James I. § Brook's Lives. Neal's Puritans.

Cotton, who was more useful than any other, in fixing the civil and ecclesiastical polity of New England. The town where he settled (Trimountain) was named Boston, to commemorate his arrival. Two years alter, the pious Richard Mather arrived, from Toxteth, near Liverpool; and became pastor of the newly formed church, at Dorchester. Dr. Cotton Mather, was grandson of both these illustrious men. Ralph Partridge fled about the same time, and settled at Duxbury. ||

The numbers who continued to emigrate, alarmed the government; and April 30th 1637, Charles I. issued a proclamation, to restrain those who fled to New England, *that they might be out of the reach of ecclesiastical authority.* Among those prevented from sailing, were Sir Arthur Haslerig, Mr. Hampton, and Oliver Cromwell. Notwithstanding all prohibitions, multitudes fled in disguise, to the new plantations, unable to endure the cruelties, to which they were subjected for nonconformity, during the reign of Charles; chiefly by the instigation of the furious Laud. By the year 1640 (memorable for the first sitting of the Long Parliament) the population of New England amounted to about 4000; and more than eighty ministers ordained in the Church of England, fled from their persecutors, and became pastors of churches, in the new plantations. † Harvard College, was founded at Newtown or Cambridge, about seven miles distant from Boston, in the year 1638. ‡ At this place, a Synod was convened in 1646, and the two following years, for the purpose of composing and publishing, "A Platform of Church Discipline." (See Introduction following, Sec. 2, & 3.) This period is also memorable, for

|| Mather's History. Brook's Lives. † Brook's Religious liberty, Vol. I. p. 448. Lives, Vol. I. p. 81, note, and p. 83—4. Mathers History, B. I. Ch. 5. ‡ Yale College and six others, have been founded in N. E. since that period.

the labours of the holy and renowned Elliot, among the Indians.

Such is the brief history of the planting of America. Excepting the miraculous age, no period presents so fair an assemblage of worthies, engaged in the noble cause of civil and religious liberty. The abundant effusions of the Divine spirit, and wonderful revivals produced in the American churches of late, sufficiently attest that the labours and prayers of those holy men, have a record on high. Nor will their names be forgotten on earth. They shall be held in admiration, when the spirit of persecution shall have ceased for ever.

Under such circumstances, did these illustrious men study the important subject of Church Discipline: a consideration alone sufficient, to give weight to their opinions. But they were pre-eminently learned, pious, laborious, and careful.

In presenting to the public, a new, and improved edition of the following, the Editor has been guided by a desire to select from the Ecclesiastical History of New England, by Dr. Cotton Mather, all the pieces of most value, on the subject of Church Discipline. § The "Platform" is too well known to need recommendation here. It is sufficient to remark, that it is the clearest and best system of Ecclesiastical Discipline extant. By most writers on the subject, it has been referred to as a standard. The great principles it exhibits, so abundantly confirmed by references to the Scriptures, have been acknowledged by all or-

§ The 'Historical Remarks, upon the Discipline practiced in the churches of New England,' 'Remarks upon the Synodical Propositions,' 'The Reforming Synod,' and 'Remarks upon the Reforming Synod,' make up the whole of the Fifth Book, in *Magnalia Christi Americana*. These not being so applicable to general purposes, have been here omitted.

thodox Congregational churches in this country, and on the American continent, with little variation, to the present time;—more than a century and a half since its first publication. Some may doubt the propriety of those references made to the Old Testament: but the Editor did not feel at liberty to expunge any one of them, or to alter in the least, the original text of this, or of any of the pieces. A few more references to the New Test. in the “Platform,” have been added; now and then a word between brackets, for clearing the sense; and a few notes. The place of some of the latter, at the end of the book, instead of immediately after the work to which they refer, the reader will be pleased to excuse, as they were unavoidably omitted, till the other pieces were printed off.

“The Principles owned, &c.” is a proof of the care which these holy men shewed, for the welfare of their posterity. It exhibits a specimen of their mode of reasoning on the questions, *Who are the subjects of Baptism?* and, *Whether according to the word of God, there ought to be a consociation of churches, and what should be the manner of it?* The opinions they entertained, on the obligations of the baptized, to own the covenant in maturer age; and, on the relation in which such persons stand to the church; deserve a more dispassionate and careful consideration, than has been given to these subjects in modern times. Do the baptized children of believers, it is asked, enjoy any peculiar relation, to that particular church, to which their parents belong? That they do, seems to follow from the limitation of the ordinance to them. To say, they are by profession, members of the universal visible church, is to grant no more than belongs to all children whatever, who are baptized. As far as the Editor can at present judge, if those who plead for this speciality in the extent of the ordinance, take not special means to prepare such children for becoming full church-members, they are not consistent with them-

selves. It may be said these enjoy better parental instruction. But many instances prove the necessity of church discipline, to enforce and secure that. Nor will the indiscriminate and superficial kind of instruction in Sabbath schools, supply the defect. It is much to be lamented, that the good old way, of every head of a family employing one part of the Sabbath, in catechetical exercises and examinations, has been to so great an extent, abandoned.

"The Heads of Agreement" are the same as were assented to, by the Presbyterian and Congregational ministers of England, in 1692. In the hope that these remains of the early Congregationalists, in their present form, may contribute to advance the cause of the Redeemer, they are now presented to the public.

NATHANIEL HIGGINS.

Whitchurch, Salop.
May, 1823.

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A
PLATFORM

OF

Church Discipline;

GATHERED OUT OF THE WORD OF GOD,

AND AGREED UPON BY THE

ELDERS AND MESSENGERS

OF THE CHURCHES,

ASSEMBLED

IN THE SYNOD,

AT CAMBRIDGE, IN NEW ENGLAND.

To be presented to the

CHURCHES AND GENERAL COURT,

FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION AND ACCEPTANCE IN

THE LORD, THE EIGHTH MONTH, ANNO MDCXLIX.

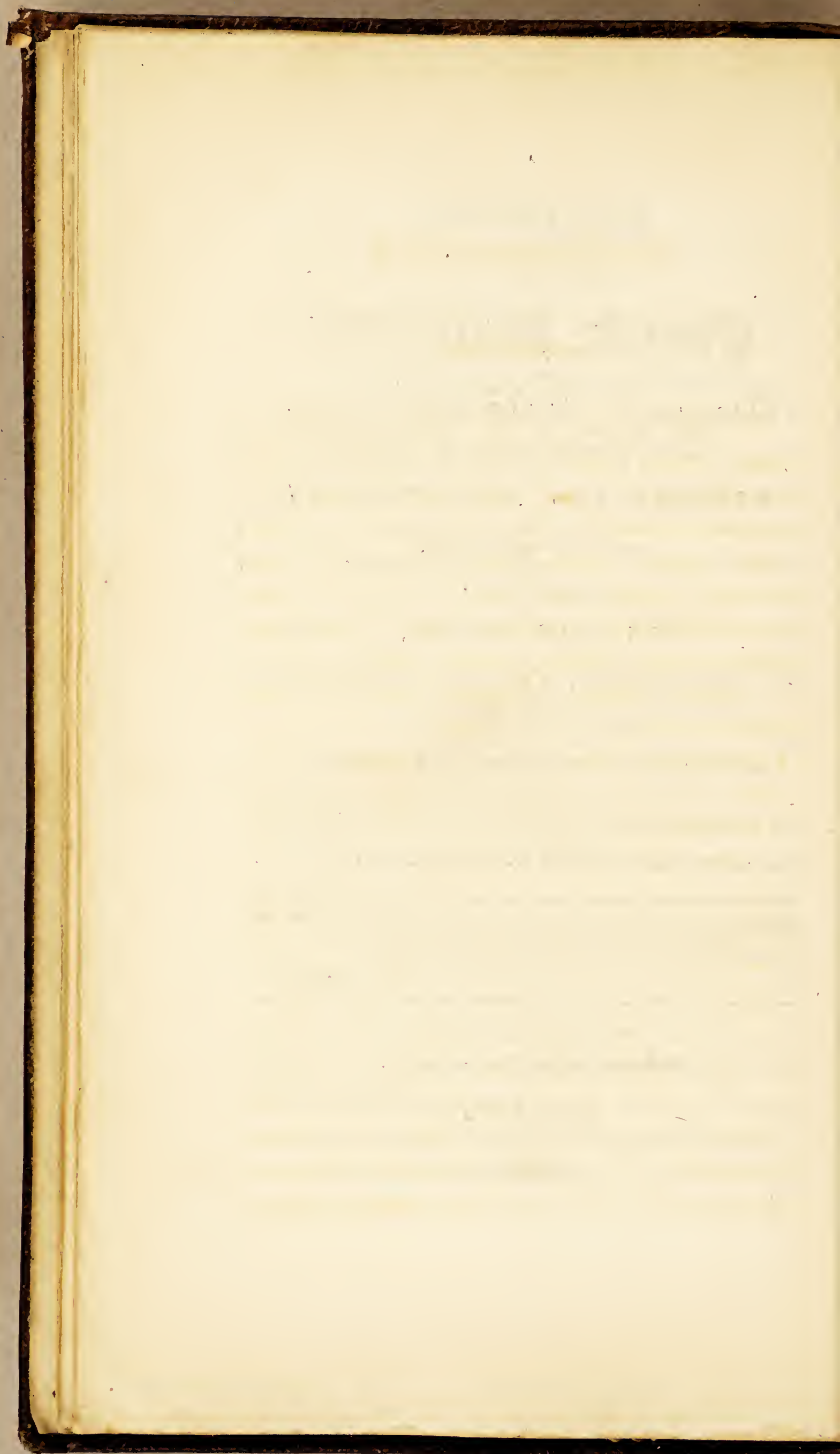
NIHIL SINE, NIHIL CONTRA, NIHIL PRÆTER, NIHIL
ULTRA, DIVINAM SCRIPTURAM, ADMITTENDUM.

P. MARTYR.

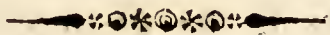
WHITCHURCH, SALOP:

REPRINTED

1823.



INTRODUCTION.



1. The churches of New England enjoying so much rest and growth as they had now seen, for some sevens of years, it was, upon many accounts, necessary for them to make such a declaration of the church-order, wherein the good hand of God had moulded them, as might convey and secure the like order unto the following generations. Next unto the Bible, which was the professed, perpetual, and *only directory* of these churches, they had no Platform of their Church-government more exact, than their famous John Cotton's well known book of, 'The Keys;' which book endeavours to lay out the just lines and bounds of all church power, and so defines the matter, that as in the State there is a dispersion of powers into several hands, which are to concur in all acts of common concernment, from whence ariseth the healthy constitution of a Commonwealth; in like sort, he assigns the powers in the Church unto several subjects, wherein the united light of scripture and of nature have placed them, with a very satisfactory distribution. He asserts, That a presbyterated society of the faithful, hath within itself a complete power of self-reformation, or if you will, of self-preservation, and may within itself manage its own choice of officers,

and censures of delinquents. Now a special statute law of our Lord, having excepted women and children from enjoying any part of this power, he finds only elders and brethren to be the constituent members, who may act in such a sacred corporation. The Elders, he finds the first Subject entrusted with government, the Brethren endowed with Privilege, inasmuch, that though the Elders only are to rule the church, and without them there can be no elections, admissions, or excommunications, and they have a negative upon the acts of the fraternity, as well as it is they only that have the power of authoritative preaching and administering the sacraments; yet the brethren have such a liberty, that without their consent, nothing of common concernment may be imposed upon them. Nevertheless, because particular churches of Elders and brethren may abuse their power with manifold miscarriages, he asserts the necessary communion of churches in Synods, who have authority to determine, declare, and enjoin, such things as may rectify the mal-administrations, or any disorders, dissensions and confusions of the congregations, which fall under their cognizance: but still so, as to leave unto the particular churches themselves the formal acts, which are to be done pursuant unto the advice of the council; upon the scandalous and obstinate refusal whereof, the council may determine, to withdraw communion from them, as from those who will not be counselled against a

notorious mismanagement of the jurisdiction which the Lord Jesus Christ has given them. This was the design of that judicious treatise, wherein was contained the substance of our church discipline; and whereof I have one remarkable thing to relate, as I go along. That great person, who afterwards proved one of the greatest scholars, divines and writers in this age, then under the prejudices of conversation, set himself to write a confutation of this very treatise of, 'The Keys;' but having made a considerable progress in his undertaking, such was the strength of this unanswerable book, that instead of his confuting it, it conquered him; and the book of, 'The Keys' was happily so blessed of God for the conveyance of Congregational principles into the now opened mind of this learned man, that he not only wrote in defence of Mr. Cotton against Mr. Cawdry, but also exposed himself to more than a little sorrow and labour, all his days, for the maintaining of those principles. Upon which occasion, the words of the Doctor [Owen in his Review of the true nature of schism] are; "this way of impartial examining all things by the word, and laying aside all prejudicate respects unto persons or present traditions, is a course that I would admonish all to beware of, who would avoid the danger of being made (what they call) Independents." Having said thus much of that book, all that I shall add concerning it is, that the famous Mr. Rutherford himself, in his treatise entitled, "A survey of the

spiritual Antichrist," has these words; "Mr. Cotton in his treatise of the Keys of the kingdom of heaven is well sound in our way, if he had given some more power to assemblies and in some lesser points." But it was convenient, the churches of New England should have a system of their discipline, extracted from the word of God, and exhibited unto them, with a more effectual, acknowledged, and established recommendation: and nothing but a council was proper to compose the system. The reader is now to expect a council at Cambridge: and in truth, another sort of council, than that sham Council of Trent, whereof one that was present, wrote this account unto the Emperor Maximilian II. "We daily saw hungry and needy Bishops come to Trent. Youths, for the most part, given to luxury and riot, hired only to give their voice, as the people pleased. They were both unlearned and simple, yet fit for the purpose, in regard of their impudent boldness. When these were added unto the Pope's old flatterers, iniquity triumphed; it was impossible to determine any thing, but as they pleased. The council seemed not to consist of Bishops, but of disguised masquers; not of men, but of images, such as Dædalus made, moved by nerves none of their own. They were hireling Bishops, which as country bag-pipes, could not speak, but as breath was put into them." The difference between the Bishops now to assemble at Cambridge, and the Bishops which then made such a noise, by their con-

venticle at Trent, was in truth not much less than that between angels and devils.

2. Wherefore a bill was preferred unto the general court, in the year 1646. for the calling of a Synod whereby a Platform of Church Discipline, according to the direction of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his blessed word, might most advantageously be composed and published. The Magistrates in the general court passed the bill, but the Deputies had their little scruples, how far the civil authority might interpose in matters of such religious and ecclesiastical cognizance; and whether scaffolds might not now be raised, by the means whereof, the civil authority should pretend hereafter to impose an uniformity, in such instances which had better be left at liberty and variety. It was replied, that it belonged unto Magistrates, by all rational ways to encourage truth and peace among their people; and that the council now called by the Magistrates, was to proceed but by way of council, with the best light which could be fetched from the word of God; but the court would be after all free, as they saw cause to approve or to reject what should be offered.

After all, though the objections of the deputies were thus answered, yet in compliance with such as were not yet satisfied, the order for the calling of the intended assembly was directed only in the form of a motion, and not of a command, unto the churches. But certain persons come lately from England so in-

flamed the zeal for liberty of conscience among the people, that all this compliance of the authority could not remove the fear of some churches, lest some invasion of that liberty were threatened, by a clause in the order of the court, which intimated, "That what should be presented by the Synod, the Court would give such allowance, as would be meet unto it." The famous and leading church of Boston particularly, was ensnared so much by this fear, that upon the Lord's day, when the order of the Court was first communicated unto them, they could not come unto an immediate resolution of sending any Delegates unto the Synod. But Mr. Norton, then of Ipswich, at Boston lecture the Thursday following, preached an elaborate sermon unto a vast auditory, on Moses and Aaron kissing each other in the mount of God. And in that sermon, he so represented the nature and power of Synods, and the respect owing from churches to rulers calling for Synods, that on the next Lord's day the church voted the sending of three Messengers, with their Elders unto this assembly. Indeed the happy experience of New England, has taken away from its churches, all occasion for any complaint, like that of Luther's *Mihi conciliorum nomen, penè tam suspectum et invisum, quàm nomen Liberi Arbitrii.*

3. It being so near winter before the Synod could convene, that few of the Ministers invited from the other colonies could be present at it, they now sat but

fourteen days ; and then adjourned unto the eighth of June, in the year ensuing. Nevertheless at their first session, there was an occasion which they took to consider and examine an important case ; and it came to this result.

A PROPOSITION, ABOUT THE MAGISTRATE'S POWER IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

‘ The civil Magistratē in matters of religion, or of
‘ the first table, hath power, civilly to command or
‘ forbid things respecting the outward man, which
‘ are clearly commanded or forbidden in the word,
‘ and to inflict suitable punishments, according to
‘ the nature of the transgressions against the same.

Several arguments with testimonies for the confirmation of this position, annexed thereunto, were afterwards printed in London, in the year 1654. accompanied with a discourse of Mr. Thomas Allen, wherein this doctrine was further explained, and I would hope so explained, that if so renowned a saint, as the famous Martin, who to the death renounced communion with the Synods, which had persuaded the Emperor to employ the civil sword against the Gnostick Priscillianists, had been alive, even he would not have altogether disallowed the desires of these good men, to see the civil Magistrate employing his power to discountenance profane and wicked heresies.

But the Platform of Church-discipline to be com-

mended unto the churches, was the main chance which the assembly was to mind; in order whereunto they directed three eminent persons, namely, Mr. John Cotton, Mr. Richard Mather, and Mr. Ralph Partridge, each of them to draw up a scriptural model of church-government; unto the end that out of those, there might be one educed, which the Synod might after the most filing thoughts upon it, send abroad. When the Synod met, at the time to which they had adjourned, the summer proved so sickly, that a delay of one year more was given to their undertaking: but at last the desired Platform of Church discipline was agreed upon, and the Synod broke up, with singing The song of Moses and the Lamb, in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation. Adding another sacred song from the nineteenth chapter of that book; which is to be found metrically paraphrased in the New England Psalm Book. So it was presented unto the General Court, in the month of October, 1648.

And the Court most thankfully accepted and approved of it. It now follows.

A

PLATFORM

OF

Church Discipline &c.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Form of Church Government; and that it is one, immutable, and prescribed in the Word.

Ecclesiastical Polity, or Church Government or Discipline, is nothing else but that form and order that is to be observed in the church of Christ upon earth, both for the constitution of it, and all the administrations, that therein are to be performed.

2. Church Government is considered in a double respect, either in regard of *the parts* of government themselves, or *necessary circumstances* thereof. The parts of government are prescribed in the Word, because the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Lawgiver in his church, is no less faithful in the house of God, than was Moses, who from the Lord delivered a form and pattern of government to the children of Israel in the Old Testament; ^a and the Holy Scriptures are now also so perfect, as [that] they are able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto every good work; ^b and therefore doubtless to the well-ordering of the house of God.

^a Heb. 3. 5, 6. Exod. 25. 40.

^b 2. Tim. 3. 16, 17.

B

3. *The parts* of church government are all of them exactly described in the word of God, being parts or means of instituted worship, according to the second commandment, ^c and therefore to continue one and the same unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a kingdom that cannot be shaken, until he shall deliver it up unto God, even to the Father. ^d So that it is not left in the power of men, officers, churches, or any state in the world to add, or diminish or alter any thing, in the least measure therein. ^e

4. *The necessary circumstances*, as time and place, &c. belonging unto order and decency, are not so left unto men, as that under pretence of them, they may thrust their own inventions upon the churches, being circumscribed in the Word, with many general limitations, where they are determined with respect of the matter to be neither worship itself, nor circumstances separable from worship. ^f In respect of their End, they must be done unto edification; ^g in respect of the Manner, decently and in order, ^h according to the nature of the things themselves, and civil and church custom. Doth not even nature itself teach you? ⁱ Yea they are in some sort

^c 1 Tim. 3. 15. 1 Chron. 15. 13. Ex. 20. 4.
^d 1 Tim. 6. 13, 16. Heb. 12. 27, 28. 1 Cor. 15. 24, 25.
^e Deut. 12. 32. Ezek. 43. 8. 1 Kings 12. 31, 32, 33.
^f 2 Kings 12. Exo. 20. 19. Isa. 28. 13. Col. 1. 22, 23.
 Acts 15. 28. Mat. 15. 9. 1 Cor. 11. 23. and 8. 3, 4.
^g 1 Cor. 14. 26. ^h 1 Cor. 14. 40. ⁱ 1 Cor. 11. 14, 16.

determined particularly, namely, that they be done in such a manner as, all circumstances considered, is most expedient for edification. j So as, if there be no error of man concerning their determination, the determining of them is to be accounted, as if it were divine. k

CHAPTER II.

Of the Nature of the catholic Church in general, and in special of a particular visible Church.

The Catholic Church is the whole company of those that are elected, redeemed, and in time effectually called from the state of sin and death, unto a state of grace and salvation in Jesus Christ.

2. This Church is either *triumphant*, or *militant*. Triumphant, the number of them who are glorified in heaven. Militant, the number of them who are conflicting with their enemies upon earth.

3. This *militant* Church is to be considered as invisible and visible. Invisible in respect of their relation wherein they stand to Christ, as a body unto the head, being united unto him by the Spirit of God, and faith in their hearts. a Visible, in respect of the profession of their faith, in their persons, and in

j 1 Cor. 14. 12, 19. k Acts 15. 28.
a 2 Tim. 2. 19. Rev. 2. 17. 1 Cor. 6. 17: Eph. 3. 17

particular churches. *b* And so, there may be acknowledged an universal visible Church. *c*

4. The *members* of the militant visible church, [may be] considered either, as not yet in church order; *d* or, walking according to the Church order of the gospel. *e* In order, and so besides the spiritual union and communion common to all believers, they enjoy moreover an union and communion ecclesiastical political.* So,† we deny an universal visible Church.

5. The *state* of the members of the militant visible Church, walking in order, was either before the law, *æconomical*, that is, in families; *f* or under the law, *national*; or since the coming of Christ, *only congregational*. (The term *Independent*, we approve not) therefore neither national, provincial, nor classical.

6. A *congregational Church* is by the institution of Christ a part of the militant visible Church, consisting of a company of saints by calling, *g* united into one body by a holy covenant, *h* for the public worship of God, *i* and the mutual edification of one another, in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus. *j*

* i. e. as particular churches or companies of believers ecclesiastically confederate. See Chap. X. Sect. 2.

† i. e. as an organized body which has power to enforce ecclesiastical Discipline. See Chap. IV.

b Rom. I. 8. I Thes. I. 8. I Tim. 6. 12.
c Isa. 2. 2. I Cor. 15. 9. Eph. 3. 21. I Cor. 10. 32.
d Acts 19. 1. & c. *e* Col. 2. 5. Mat. 18. 17. I Cor. 5. 12.
f Gen. 18. 19. *g* Exod. 19. 6. Acts 11. 26. Rom. 16. 5.
 I Cor. 14. 23. 36. & 1. 2. & 12. 27. & 2. 1. 1. *h* Ex 19. 5.
 Deut. 29. 1. & 9. to 15 *i* Acts 2. 42 *j* I Cor. 14. 26.

CHAPTER III.

Of the Matter of the visible church, both in respect of quality and quantity.

The matter of the visible Church are *saints by calling*.

2. By saints, we understand, 1. Such as have not only attained the knowledge of the principles of religion, and are free from gross and open scandals, but also do, together with the profession of their faith and repentance, walk in blameless obedience to the Word, ^a so as that in charitable discretion they may be accounted saints by calling, ^b (tho' perhaps some or more of them be unsound and hypocrites inwardly,) because the members of such particular churches, are commonly by the Holy Ghost called *saints and faithful brethren in Christ*, ^c & sundry churches have been reprov'd for receiving and suffering such persons to continue in fellowship among them, as have been offensive and scandalous; ^d the name of God also, by this means is blasphemed, and the holy things of God defiled and profaned, ^e the hearts of the godly griev'd, ^f and the wicked themselves hardened, and holpen forward to damnation. ^g The example of such doth endanger the sanctity of others, a little leaven leaveneth

a 1 Cor. 1. 2. Eph. 1. 1. Heb. 6. 1. 1 Cor. 1. 5.
 Rom 15. 14. Psalm 50. 16, 17. b Acts 8. 37. Mat. 3. 6.
 Rom. 6. 17. 1 Cor. 1. 2 Phil. 1. 2. c Col. 1. 2. Eph. 1. 1,
 d 1 Cor. 5. 2, 13. Rev. 2. 14. 15. 20. e Ezek. 44. 7, 9.
 & 23. 38, 39. Numb. 19. 20.
 f Hag. 2. 13. 14. g 1 Cor. 11. 27, 29. Psalm 37. 21.

the whole lump. e 2. The *children* of such, who are also holy. f *

3. The members of churches, though orderly constituted, may in time degenerate and grow corrupt, and scandalous, g which though they ought not to be tolerated in the church, yet their continuance therein, through the defect of the execution of discipline and just censures, doth not immediately dissolve the being of a church, as appears in the church of *Israel*, and the churches of *Galatia* and *Corinth*, *Pergamos* and *Thyatira*. h *

4. The Matter of the Church, in respect of its *quantity*, ought not to be of greater number than may ordinarily meet together conveniently in one place; nor ordinarily fewer than may conveniently carry on church work. Hence when the holy scripture makes mention of the saints combined into a church estate, in a town or city, where was but one congregation, it usually calleth those saints THE CHURCH, in the singular number, as *the church* of the Thessalonians, *the church* of Smyrna, Philadelphia, &c. i But when it speak-

* Children were regarded capable of covenanting, among the Israelites. see Deut. 29 ch. particularly 11 verse. And in the N. T. Children under parental authority and tuition, were addressed, &c. as well as adult Church members. see Eph. 6. 1, to 4. Col. 3. 20, 21. 2 John 1, 4, 13.

e 1 Cor. 5. 6. 2 Cor. 7. 14. f Matt. 19. 14. 1 Cor. 7. 14. Eph. 6. 1. Col. 3. 20. g Jer. 2. 21. 1 Cor. 5. 12. h Jer. 2. 4. Gal. 5. 4. 2 Cor. 12. 21. Rev. 1. 14, 15. & 21. 21. 1 Cor. 14. 21. i Matt. 18. 17. Rom. 16. 1. 1 Thes. 1. 1. Rev. 2. 18. & 3. 7.

eth of the saints in a nation or province, wherein there were sundry congregations, it frequently and usually calleth them by the name of CHURCHES, in the plural number, as the *churches* of Asia, Galatia, Macedonia, and the like: j which is further confirmed by what is written of sundry of those churches in particular, how they were assembled and met together the whole church in one place, as the church at *Jerusalem*, the church at *Antioch*, the church at *Corinth* and *Cenchrea*, tho' it were more near to Corinth, it being the port thereof, and answerable to a village, yet being a distinct congregation from Corinth, it had a church of its own as well as Corinth had. k

5. Nor can it with reason be thought but that every church appointed and ordained by Christ, had a ministry appointed, and ordained for the same, and it is plain that there were no ordinary officers appointed by Christ for any other than *congregational* churches; elders being appointed to feed not all flocks, but the particular flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, and that flock they must attend, even the whole flock. l And one congregation being as much as any ordinary elders can attend, therefore, there is no greater church than a congregation, which may ordinarily meet in one place.

j I Cor. 16. 1, 19. Gal. 1. 2. 2 Cor. 8. 1. 1 Thes. 2. 14.
 k 1 Cor. 14. 23. Acts 2. 46. & 5. 12. & 6. 2. & 14. 27.
 & 15. 38. 1 Cor. 5. 4. Rom. 16. 1.
 l Acts 20. 28.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Form of the visible church, and of the church covenant.

Saints by calling must have a visible *political union* among themselves, or else they are not yet a particular church, as those similitudes hold forth, which the scripture makes use of to shew the nature of particular churches; as a *body*, ^a a *building*, ^b *house*; ^c *hands, eyes, feet* and other members, must be united, or else, (remaining separate) they are not a body. ^d Stones, timber, though squared hewen and polished, are not a house, until they are compacted, and united: so saints or believers in judgment of charity, are not a church, unless orderly knit together.

2. Particular churches cannot be distinguished one from another, but by their *forms*. *Ephesus* is not *Smyrna*, nor *Pergamos Thyatira*, but each one a distinct society of itself; having officers of their own, which had not the charge of others; virtues of their own for which others are not praised; corruptions of their own, for which others are not blamed. *

3. This form is the *visible covenant*, agreement, or consent, whereby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the ordinances of Christ to-

a 1 Cor. 12. 27. b Eph. 2. 22. c 1 Tim. 3. 15. d 1 Cor. 12. 15, 16, 17.

* For addresses to these as distinct churches, see Rev. 2 & 3 Chap.

gether in the same society, which is usually called the *church covenant*: ^e For we see not otherwise how members can have church power over one another mutually. The comparing of each particular church to a *city*, ^f and unto a *spouse*, ^g seemeth to conclude not only a form, but that that form is by way of covenant. The covenant, as it was that which made the family of *Abraham*, and children of *Israel* to be a church and people unto God, ^h so is it that which now makes the several societies of Gentile believers to be churches in these days. ⁱ

4 This voluntary agreement, consent or covenant (for all these are here taken for the same) altho' the more express and plain it is, the more fully it puts us in mind of our mutual duty, and stirreth us up to it, and leaveth less room for the questioning of the truth of the church-estate of a company of professors, and the truth of membership of particular persons; yet we conceive the substance of it is kept, where there is a real agreement and consent of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one Congregation, for the public Worship of God, and their mutual edification: which real agreement and consent they do express by their constant practice in coming together for the public Worship of God, and by their religious subjection unto the ordinances of God there: ^k [and] the rather, if we consider

^e Ex. 19. 5, 8. Deut. 29. 12, 13. Zec. 11. 14. & 9. 11.

^f Eph. 2. 19. ^g 2 Cor. 11. 2. ^h Gen. 17. 7. ⁱ Eph. 2. 12, 18.

^k Ex. 19. 5. & 20. 8. & 24. 4, 17.

how scripture covenants have been entered into, not only expressly by word of mouth, ^l but by sacrifice, ^m by hand-writing and seal, ⁿ and also sometimes by silent consent, without any writing or expression of words at all. ^o

5. This Form being by *mutual covenant*, it followeth, it is not faith in the heart, nor the profession of that faith, nor cohabitation, nor baptism. 1. Not *faith in the heart*, because that is invisible. 2. Not *a bare profession*, because that declareth them no more to be members of one church than another. 3. Not *cohabitation*, Atheists or Infidels may dwell together with believers. 4. Not *baptism*, because it presupposeth a church-estate, as circumcision in the *Old Testament*, which gave no being to the church, the church being before it, and in the wilderness without it. [Besides,] seals presuppose a covenant already in being. And one person is a complete subject of baptism, but one person is incapable of being a church.

6. All believers ought, as God giveth them opportunity thereunto, to endeavour to join themselves unto a particular Church, and that in respect of *the honour of Jesus Christ*, in his example and institution, ^p by the professed acknowledgment of, and subjection unto the order and ordinances of the Gospel: ^q as also in respect of their *good of communion* founded upon their visible union, and contained in the promises of Christ's

^l Josh. 24. 18, to 24. ^m Psa. 50. 5. ⁿ Neh. 9. 38. & 10. 1. ^o Gen. 17. & Deut. 29. ^p Matt. 3. 13, 14, 15. Matt. 10. 32. Matt. 28. 19, 20. ^q Acts 2. 47. & 9. 26.

special presence in the church; q whence they have fellowship with him, and in him, one with another: r also in the Keeping of them in the way of God's commandments, and Recovering them in case of wandering, (which all Christ's sheep are subject to in this life) being unable to return of themselves; s together with the benefit of Their mutual edification, and [that] of their Posterity, t that they may not be cut off from the privileges of the Covenant. Otherwise, if a Believer offends, he remains destitute of the remedy provided in that behalf. v And should all Believers neglect this duty of joining to all particular congregations, it might follow thereupon, that Christ should have no visible political Churches upon earth.

CHAPTER V.

Of the first Subject of Church-Power; or to whom church-power doth first belong.

1. The first Subject of Church-Power is either supreme, or subordinate and ministerial. The *supreme* (by way of gift from the Father) is the Lord Jesus Christ. a The *ministerial* is either Extraordinary, as the apostles, prophets and evangelists; b or Ordinary, as every particular congregational church. c

2. Ordinary Church power, is either power of

q Psa. 133. & 87, 7. Matt. 18. 20. r 1. John 1. 3.
 s Psa. 119. 176. 1. Pet. 2. 25. t Eph. 4. 16. Job
 22. 24, 25. v Matt. 18. 15, 16, 17.
 a Rev. 3. 7. Isa. 9. 6. b. John 20. 21, 23. Matt. 18. 18.
 1 Cor. 14. 32. Titus. 1 5. c 1 Cor. 5. 12.

office, i. e. such as is proper to the eldership; *e* or power of *privilege*, such as belongs to the brotherhood. *f* The latter is in the brethren formally and immediately from Christ, i. e. so as it may be acted or exercised immediately by themselves: the former [viz. power of office] is not in them formally or immediately, and therefore cannot be acted or exercised immediately by them, but it is said to be in them, in that *they* design the persons unto Office, who only are to act or to exercise this power.

CHAPTER VI.

Of the Officers of the church, and especially of Pastors and Teachers.

1. A Church being a company of people combined together by covenant for the worship of God, it appeareth thereby, that there may be the essence and being of a Church without any officers, seeing there is both the form and matter of a Church; which is implied when it is said, *The Apostles ordained elders in every church.* *a*

2. Nevertheless, though officers be not absolutely necessary to the simple being of Churches, when they *be* called; yet ordinarily they are *to* their calling, *b* and their well-being: *c* and therefore the Lord Jesus Christ, out of his tender compassion, hath appointed

e Rom. 12. 4. 8. *f* Acts 1. 23. & 6. 3, 4. & 14. 23.
1 Cor. 10. 29, 30.

a Acts 14. 23. *b* Rom. 10. 17. *c* Jer. 3. 15.

and ordained officers, which he would not have done, if they had not been useful and needful for the church; d yea, being ascended up to heaven, he received gifts for men, and gave gifts to men; e whereof officers for the church are justly accounted no small parts, they being to continue to the end of the world, and for the perfecting of all the saints. f

3. These *officers* were either *extraordinary* or *ordinary*: Extraordinary, as apostles, prophets, evangelists, g Ordinary, as Elders and Deacons. g The apostles, prophets, and evangelists, as they were called extraordinarily by Christ, h so, their office i ended with themselves. j † Whence it is that Paul directing Timothy, how to carry along church-administration, giveth no direction about the choice or course of apostles, prophets, or evangelists, but only of Elders k and Deacons: l and when Paul was to take his last leave of the church of Ephesus, he committed the care of feeding the church to no other, but unto the Elders of that church. m The like charge does Peter commit to the Elders. n

4. Of *Elders* (who are also in scripture called

d Eph, 4. 11. e Psa. 68. 18. Eph. 4, 8, 11. f Eph. 4. 12, 13. g Eph. 4. 11. 1 Cor. 12. 28, 29. Phil. 1. 1 h Acts 1. 1, to 8. and 2. 1, to 12. and 9. 6, 16, 19. 1 Cor, 9. 1. i Acts 4. 33. and 5. 12. and 8. 17. and 10. 44, to 46. and 11. 15. j Rom. 11. 13. 2 Cor. 12. 12. 1 Cor. 4. 9. k 1 Tim. 3. 1, to 7. Titus 1. 5, to 9. l 1 Tim. 3. 8, to 15. m Acts 20. 17, 28. n 1. Pet. 5. 1. 2, 3.

† See note [A] at the end.

Bishops) o some attend chiefly to the ministry of the word, as the Pastors and Teachers; p others attend especially unto rule; who are therefore called Ruling Elders. q

5. The offices of Pastor and Teacher, appear to be distinct. r The Pastor's special work is, to attend to exhortation, and therein to administer a word of wisdom. The Teacher is to attend to doctrine, and therein to administer a word of knowledge. s And either of them to administer the seals of that covenant unto the dispensation whereof they are alike called; as also to execute the censures, being but a kind of application of the word: the preaching of which, together with the application thereof, they are alike charged withal. t

6. Forasmuch as both Pastors and Teachers are given by Christ, for the perfecting of the saints, and edifying of his body; which saints and body of Christ is his church: u and therefore we account Pastors and Teachers to be both of them church officers, ‡ and not the Pastor for the church, and the Teacher only for the schools: though this we gladly acknowledge, that schools are both lawful, profitable, and necessary for the training up of such in good literature or learning, as may afterwards be called forth unto [the] office of Pastor or Teacher in the church. v

q 1 Tim. 5. 17. ‡ See note [B] at the end.
 r Eph. 4. 11. Rom. 12. 7, 8. s 1 Cor. 12. 8. and 2. 6, 7.
 and 14. 20. and 1. 5. Heb. 5. 12. t 2 Tim. 4. 1, 2. Titus
 1. 9, u Eph. 4. 11, 12. and 1. 22, 23. v 1 Sam. 10. 12.
 and 19. 20. 2 Kings 2. 3, 15. 2 Tim. 2. 2.

CHAPTER VII.

Of ruling Elders and Deacons.

The Ruling Elders' *office* is distinct from the office of Pastor and Teacher; * [but] the ruling Elders are not so called to exclude the Pastors and Teachers from ruling, because ruling and governing is common to these with the other; a whereas attending to teach and preach the word is peculiar unto the former. x †

2. The Ruling Elder's *work* is to join with the Pastor and Teacher in those acts of spiritual rule, b which are distinct from the ministry of the word and sacraments committed to them: of which sort these be as followeth. 1. To open and shut the doors of God's house, by the *admission* of members approved by the church; c by *ordination* of officers chosen by the church; d and by *excommunication* of notorious and obstinate offenders renounced by the church; e and by *restoring* of penitents forgiven by the church. f 2. To call the church together when there is occasion, and seasonably to dismiss them again. g 3. To prepare matters in private, that in public they may be carried [to] an end with less trouble and more speedy dispatch. h 4. To moderate the carriage of all matters in the church assembled, as to propound matters

a 1 Tim. 5. 17. 1 Cor. 12. 28. Heb. 13. 17. x Rom. 12. 7, 8. b 1 Tim. 5. 17. c 2 Chron. 23. 19. Rev. 21. 12. d 1 Tim. 4. 14. e Matt. 18. 17. f 2 Cor. 2. 7, 8, 9, 10. g Acts 2. 6. and 6. 2, 3. h Acts 21. 18, 22, 23.

* See note [C] at the end. † i. e. Pastors and Teachers.

to the church. i To order the season of speech and silence, and to pronounce sentence according to the mind of Christ, with the consent of the church. j
 5. To be guides and leaders to the church in all matters whatsoever pertaining to church-administrations and actions. k 6. To see that none in the church live inordinately, out of rank and place, without a calling, or idly in their calling. l 7. To prevent and heal such offences in life or in doctrine as might corrupt the church. 8. To feed the flock of God with a word of admonition. m 9. And as they shall be sent for, to visit and pray over their sick brethren. n
 10. And at other times, as opportunity shall serve thereunto. o

3. *The office of a Deacon* is instituted in the church by the Lord Jesus. p Sometimes they are called Helps. q The scripture telleth us how they should be qualified. Grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not given to filthy lucre. They must first be proved, and then use the office of a Deacon, being found blameless. s The office and work of a Deacon is to receive the offerings of the church, gifts given to the church, and to keep the treasury of the church, and therewith to serve the tables, t which the church is to provide for; u as the

i Acts 13. 15. j Heb. 13. 7, 17. k 2 Cor. 8. 19. l 1 Thes. 2. 10. 11, 12. m Acts 20. 28, 32. n James 5. 14. o Acts 20. 20. p Acts 6. 3, 6. Phill. 1. 1. q 1 Cor. 12. 28. s 1 Tim. 3. 8, 9, 10, 12. t Acts 6. 2, 3. u Acts 4. 35, 36, 37.

Lord's table, the table of the Ministers, v and of such as are in Necessity, w to whom they are to distribute in simplicity. x

4. The *office* therefore, being limited unto the care of the *temporal* good things of the church, it extends not to the attendance upon, and administration of the spiritual things thereof, as the word sacraments and the like. y

5. The ordinance of the Apostle, and practice of the church, commends the Lord's day as a fit time for the contributions of the saints. z

6. *The instituting* of all these officers in the church, is the work of God himself, a of the Lord Jesus Christ, b and of the Holy Ghost: c and therefore such officers as he hath not appointed, are altogether unlawful either to be placed in the church, or to be retained therein, and are to be looked at as human creatures, mere inventions and appointments of man, to the great dishonour of Christ Jesus, the Lord of, and the King of his church, whether Popes, Cardinals, Patriarchs, Arch-bishops, Lord-bishops, Arch-deacons, Officials, Commissaries, and the like. These and the rest of that hierarchy and retinue, not being plants of the Lord's planting, shall all be certainly rooted out and cast forth. d

v Gal. 6. 6. 1 Tim. 5. 17, 18. 1 Cor. 9. 6, to 14.
w Gal. 2. 10. Heb. 13. 3, 16. 1 John 3. 17. x Rom. 12.
8. y 1 Cor. 7. 17. z 1 Cor. 16. 1, 2, 3. Gal. 2. 10.
a 1 Cor. 12. 28 b Eph. 4. 8, 11. c Acts. 20. 28.
d Matt. 15. 13. C 3

7. The Lord hath appointed ancient widows (where they may be had) to minister in the church, in giving attendance to the sick, and to give succour unto them, and to others in the like necessities. *e*

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the election of church officers.

No man may take the honour of a church officer unto himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron. *a*

2. *Calling unto office* is either *immediate* by Christ himself, such was the call of the Apostles and Prophets. *b* This manner of calling ended with them, as hath been said. Or *mediate*, by the church. *c*

3. It is meet, that before any be ordained, or chosen officers, they should first be tried and proved, because hands are not suddenly to be laid upon any, *d* and both Elders and Deacons must be of both honest and good report. *e*

4. The things in respect of which they are to be tried, are those gifts and virtues, which the Scripture requireth, in men that are to be elected unto such places, viz. That Elders must be blameless, sober, apt to teach, and endued with such other qualifications as are laid down, I. Tim. 3. 2. Tit. 1. 6, to 9. Deacons to be fitted, as is directed, Acts 6. 3. I. Tim. 3. 8, to 11.

e 1 Tim. 5. 9, 10.

a Heb. 5. 4. *b* Gal. 1. 1. *c* Acts 14. 23. and 6. 3.
d 1 Tim. 5. 22. *e* 1 Tim. 3. 7, 10. Acts 16. 2. and 6. 3.

5. *Officers are to be called by such churches, whereunto they are to minister.* Of such moment is the preservation of this power, that the churches exercised it in the presence of the Apostles. *f*

6. A church being free, cannot become subject to any, but by a free election; *g* yet when such a people do choose any to be over them in the Lord, then do they become subject, and most willingly submit to their ministry in the Lord, whom they have so chosen. *h*

7. And if the church have power to choose their officers and ministers, then in case of manifest unworthiness and delinquency, they have power also to depose them: for to open and shut, to choose and refuse, to constitute in office, and to remove from office, are acts belonging to the same power. *i*

8. We judge it much conducing to the well-being, and communion of the churches, that where it may conveniently be done, neighbour churches be advised withal, and their help be made use of in trial of church-officers, in order to their choice. *j*

9. The choice of such church-officers belongeth not to the civil magistrate as such, or Diocesan Bishops, or Patrons: for of these, or any such like, the scripture is wholly silent, as having any power therein.

f Acts 14. 23. & 1. 23. & 6. 3, 4, 5. *g* Gal. 5. 13. *h* Heb. 13. 17.
i Rom. 16. 17. Gal. 1. 9. and 5. 12. 1 Tim. 5, 19, 20, 21.
j Cant. 8. 8, 9. 2 Cor. 8. 19. 1 Cor. 16. 3.

CHAPTER IX.

Of Ordination and Imposition of hands.

1. Church-officers are not only to be chosen by the church, but also to be ordained by imposition of hands and prayer, with which, at the ordination of elders, fasting also is to be joined. ^a

2. This *ordination*, we account nothing else, but the solemn putting a man into his place and office in the church. whereunto he had right before by election: ^b being like the installing of a magistrate in the Commonwealth. Ordination therefore is not to go before, but to follow election. ^c The essence and substance of the outward calling of an ordinary officer in the church, does not consist in his ordination, but in his voluntary and free election by the church, and his accepting of that election: whereupon is founded that relation, between Pastor and flock, between such a minister and such a people. Ordination does not constitute an officer, nor give him the essentials of his office. The Apostles were Elders, without imposition of hands by men: Paul and Barnabas were officers before that imposition of hands, Acts 13. 3. The posterity of Levi were Priests and Levites, before hands were laid on them by the children of Israel.

^a Acts 13. 3. and 14. 23. 1 Tim. 5. 22. ^b Numb. 8. 10. Acts 6. 5, 6. and 13. 2, 3. ^c Acts 6. 5, 6. and 14. 23.

3. In such churches where there are Elders, imposition of hands in ordination, is to be performed by those Elders. d

4. In such churches where there are no Elders, imposition of hands may be performed by some of the brethren orderly chosen by the church thereunto. For, if the people may elect officers, which is the greater, and wherein the substance of the office doth consist, they may much more (occasion and need so requiring) impose hands in ordination; which is less, and but the accomplishment of the other.

5. Nevertheless, in such churches where there are no Elders, and the church so desire, we see not why imposition of hands may not be performed by the *Elders of other churches*. Ordinary officers laid hands upon the officers of many churches: the Presbytery at Ephesus laid hands upon Timothy an Evangelist; e the Presbytery at Antioch laid hands upon Paul and Barnabas. f

6. *Church-officers are officers to one church*, even that [in] particular over which the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers. Insomuch as Elders are commanded to feed not all flocks, but *the* flock, which is committed to their faith and trust, and dependeth upon them. g Nor can constant residence at one congregation be necessary for a minister, no nor yet

d 1 Tim. 4. 14. Acts 13. 3. 1 Tim. 5. 22. Numb. 3. 10.
e 1 Tim. 4. 14. f Acts 13. 3. g 1 Peter 5. 2.

lawful, if he be not a minister to one congregation only, but to the church universal; because he may not attend one part only of the church, to which he is a minister but he is called to attend unto *all* the flock. h*

7. He that is clearly released from his office-relation unto that church, whereof he was a minister, cannot be looked at, as an officer, nor perform any act of office, in any other church, unless he be again orderly called unto office: which, when it shall be, we know nothing to hinder; but imposition of hands also in his ordination ought to be used towards him again: for so Paul the Apostle received imposition of hands twice at least from Ananias, Acts 9. 17. and 13. 3.

CHAPTER X.

Of the power of the Church and its Presbytery.

1. *Supreme and lordly power* over all the churches upon earth doth only belong to Jesus Christ, who is King of the church, a and the head thereof. b He hath the government upon his shoulders, c and hath all power given to him both in heaven and earth. d

h. Acts 20. 28.

* The Apostles were entrusted with the care of all the churches, 2 Cor. 11. 28. Acts 15. 36 to 41. & 14. 21, 22, 23. So Timothy and Titus as fellow-labourers of the Apostles, under their direction overlooked several churches in a district. 2. Tim. 4. 5. 1. Thess. 3. 2. Tit. 1. 5. But neither of these can furnish an example to modern Diocesan Bishops.

a Psalm 2. 6. b Eph. 1, 21, 22 c Isa. 9. 6. d Mat. 28, 18.

2. A company of professed believers, ecclesiastically confederate, as they are a church before they have officers, and without them; so even in that estate *subordinate church-power* under Christ, delegated to them by him, doth belong to them in such a manner, as is before expressed, ^e Chap. V. Sect. 2. and as flowing from the very nature and essence of a church; it being natural unto all bodies, and so unto a church-body, to be furnished with sufficient power for its own preservation and subsistence.

3. This *government of the church* is a *mixed government* and so has been acknowledged, long before the term of Independency was heard of. In respect of Christ the head and king of the church, and the sovereign power residing in him, and exercised by him, it is a *monarchy*; ^f in respect of the body or Brotherhood of the church, and power from Christ granted unto them, it resembles a *democracy*; ^g in respect of the Presbytery and power committed unto them, it is an *aristocracy*. ^h

4. The *sovereign power*, which is *peculiar unto Christ* is exercised, 1. In calling the church out of the world, into an holy fellowship with himself. ⁱ 2. In instituting the ordinances of his worship, ^j and appointing his ministers and officers for the dispen-

^e Acts 1. 23, and 14. 23. and 6. 3, 4. Matt. 18. 17. 1 Cor. 5. 4, 5. ^f Rev. 3. 7. ^g 1 Cor. 5. 12. ^h 1 Tim. 5. 14. ⁱ Gal. 1. 4. Rev. 5. 8, 9. ^j Matt. 28. 20.

sing of them. k 3. In giving laws for the ordering of all our ways, and the ways of his house. l 4. In giving power and life to all his institutions, and to his people by them. m 5. In protecting and delivering his church, against, and from all the enemies of their peace. n

5. *The power granted by Christ unto the body of the church and brotherhood, is a prerogative or privilege which the church doth exercise.* 1. In choosing their own officers, whether Elders or Deacons. o 2. In admission of their members; p and therefore there is great reason they should have power to remove any from their fellowship again. Hence, in case of offence, any brother hath power to convince and admonish an offending brother; and in case of not hearing him, to take one or two more to set on the admonition: and in case of not hearing them, to proceed to tell the church: and as his offence may require, the whole church has power to proceed to the censure of him, whether by admonition or excommunication: q and upon his repentance to restore him again unto his former communion. r

6. *In case an Elder offend incorrigibly, the matter so requiring, as the church had power to call him to office, so they have power according to order (the*

k Eph. 4. 8, 11.

l James 4. 12. Isa. 33. 22. 1 Tim. 3. 15. m 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5.
 n Isa. 32. 2. Luke 1. 71. o Acts 6. 3, 5. & 14. 23.
 1 John 4. 1. p Acts 9. 26. q Matt. 18. 15, 16, 17. Tit.
 3. 10. Col. 4. 17. r Matt. 18. 17. 2 Cor. 2. 6, 7 8.
 Gal. 6. 1.

counsel of other churches, where it may be had, directing thereto) to remove him from his office, ^s and being now but a member, in case he add contumacy to his sin, the church, that had power to receive him into their fellowship, hath also the same power to cast him out, that they have concerning any other member. ^t

7. *Church-government* or *rule* is placed by Christ in the officers of the church, who are therefore called rulers, while they rule with God: ^u yet in case of Mal-administration, they are subject to the power of the church, as hath been said before. The Holy Ghost frequently, yea always, where it mentioneth church-rule, and church-government, ascribeth it to elders: ^v whereas the work and duty of the people is expressed in the phrase of *obeying their elders*, and *submitting themselves unto them in the Lord*. ^w So as it is manifest that an organic or complete church, is a body politic, consisting of some that are governors, and some that are governed in the Lord.

8. The Power which Christ hath committed to the elders, is to Feed and Rule the church of God, ^x and accordingly: [1] To call the church together up-

^s Gal. 1. 9. Col. 4. 17. Rom. 16. 17. ^t Matt. 18. 17.
^u Gal. 5. 12. 1 Tim. 5. 17. Heb. 13. 17. 1 Thess. 5.
^v 12. Rom. 12. 8. 1 Tim. 5. 17. 1 Cor. 12. 28, 29.
^w Heb. 13. 7, 8, 17. 1 Thess. 5. 12, 13. ^x Acts 20.
 17, 28.

on any weighty occasion; y when the members so called, without just cause, may not refuse to come, z nor when they are come, depart before they are dismissed, a nor speak in the church, before they have leave from the Elders, nor continue so doing when they require silence; b nor may they oppose or contradict the judgment or sentence of the Elders, without sufficient and weighty cause, c because such practices are manifestly contrary unto order and government, and inlets of disturbance, and tend to confusion.

9. It belongs also unto the Elders, [2] To examine any officers or members before they be received of the church. d [3] To receive the accusations brought to the church, and to prepare them for the church's hearing. e [4] In handling of offences and other matters before the church, they have power to declare and publish the will of God, touching the same, and to pronounce sentence with the consent of the church. f Lastly, they have power when they dismiss the people, to bless them in the name of the Lord. g

10. This power of *government* in the elders, doth not any wise prejudice the power of *privilege* in the brotherhood; as neither the power of privilege in the brethren, doth prejudice the power of government in the

y Acts 6. 2. z Num. 16. 12. a Ezek. 46. 10. b Acts 13. 15.
 c Hos. 4. 4. d Rev. 2. 2. 1 Tim. 5. 19.
 c Acts 21. 18, 22, 23. f 1 Cor. 5. 4, 5. g Num. 6. 23, to 26. 2 Cor. 13. 14.

elders, but they may sweetly agree together; as we may see in the example of the Apostles, furnished with the greatest church-power, who took in the concurrence and consent of the brethren in church-administrations. ^h Also that Scripture, II Cor. 2. 9. and 10. 6. does declare, that what the churches were to *act* and to *do* in these matters, they were to do in a way of obedience, and that not only to the direction of the Apostles, but also of their ordinary Elders. ⁱ

11. From the premises, namely, that the ordinary power of government belonging only to the Elders, power of privilege remaining with the brotherhood (as the power of judgment in matters of censure, and power of liberty in matters of liberty) it followeth, That in an organic church and right administration, all church-acts proceed after the manner of a mixed administration, so as no church-act can be consummated or perfected, without the consent of *both*.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the maintenance of church-officers.

1. The Apostle concludes, that necessary and sufficient maintenance is due unto the Ministers of the word from the law of nature and nations, from the

^h Acts 15. 4, 23. & 6. 2. 1 Cor. 5. 4. 2 Cor. 2. 6, 7
ⁱ Heb. 13. 17.

law of Moses, the equity thereof, as also the rule of common reason. ^a Moreover the scripture doth not only call Elders labourers and workmen, but also speaking of them, doth say, that "the labourer is worthy of his hire:" ^b and requires that he that is taught in the word, should communicate unto him [that teacheth] in all good things, ^c and mentions it as an ordinance of the Lord, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel, ^d and forbiddeth the muzzling of the mouth of the ox, that treadeth out the corn. ^e

2. The scriptures alledged, requiring this maintenance as a bounded duty, and due debt, and not as a matter of alms and free gift, therefore [the] people are not at liberty to do or not to do, what and when they please in this matter, no more than in any other commanded duty and ordinance of the Lord; but ought of duty to minister of their "carnal things," to them that labour among them in word and doctrine, as well as they ought to pay any other workmen their wages, and to discharge and satisfy their debts, or to submit themselves to observe any other ordinance of the Lord. ^f

3. The Apostle (Gal. 6. 6.) enjoining that he who is taught, communicate to him that teacheth in

a 1 Cor. 9. 1, to 14. b 1 Tim. 5. 18. c Gal. 6. 6.
 d 1 Cor. 9. 14. e 1 Cor. 9. 9. 1 Tim. 5. 17, 18.
 f Rom. 15. 27. 1 Cor. 9. 21.

all good things, doth not leave it arbitrary, what or how much a man shall give, or in what proportion, but even the latter, as well as the former, is prescribed and appointed by the Lord. g

4. Not only members of churches but *all that are taught in the word* are to contribute unto him that teacheth in all good things. In case that congregations are defective in their contributions, the Deacons are to call upon them to do their duty. h If their call sufficeth not, the church by her power is to require it of their members; and where church-power through the corruption of men doth not, or cannot attain the end, the magistrate* is to see that the ministry be duly provided for, as appears from the commended example of Nehemiah. i The magistrates are nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers, j and stand charged with the custody of both tables; because it is better to prevent a scandal that it may not come, and easier also, than to remove it, when it is given. It is most suitable to rule, that by the church's care, each man should know his proportion according to rule, what he should do before he do it, that so his

g 1 Cor. 16. 2. h Acts 6. 3, 4. i Neh. 13. 11.
j Isaiah 49. 23.

* Modern Congregationalists deny the right of any civil power to interfere with religion: and it is certainly not countenanced by the New Testament.

judgment and heart may be satisfied in what he doeth,
and just offence prevented in what is done. k

CHAPTER XII.

Of the admission of members into the church.

1. The doors of the churches of Christ upon earth, do not by God's appointment stand so wide open, that all sorts of people good and bad, may freely enter therein at their pleasure, a but such as are admitted thereto as members, ought to be examined and tried first, whether they be fit and meet to be received into church-society or not. b The eunuch of Ethiopia before his admission, was examined by Philip, whether he did believe on Jesus Christ with all his heart. c The Angel of the church at Ephesus, is commended for trying such as said they were Apostles and were not. d There is like reason for trying of them that profess themselves to be believers. e The officers are charged with the keeping of the doors of the church, and therefore are in a special manner to make trial of the fitness of such who enter. Twelve Angels are set at the gates of the temple, lest such as were ceremonially unclean should enter thereinto. f

2. The *things* which are *requisite* to be found in all church members are, Repentance from sin, g and

k 2 Cor. 8. 13, 14. a 2 Cor. 6. 14, to 18. b 2 Chron. 29. 19. Matt. 13. 25. & 22. 12. c Acts 8. 37. d Rev. 2. 2. e Acts 9. 26 to 28. f Rev. 21. 12. 2 Chron. 23. 19. g Acts 2. 38, to 42.

Faith in Jesus Christ. ^h And therefore these are the things whereof men are to be examined at their admission into the church, and which, then they must profess and hold forth in such sort as may satisfy rational charity that the things are indeed [possessed.] ⁱ John Baptist admitted men to baptism confessing and bewailing their sins. ^j And of others it is said, that they “came and confessed, and shewed their deeds.” ^k

3. The weakest measure of faith is to be accepted in those that desire to be admitted into the church, if *sincere*, ^l [i. e. if they] have the Substance of that faith, repentance, and holiness, which is required in church-members; and such have most need of the ordinances for their confirmation and growth in grace. The Lord Jesus would not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed; ^m but gather the tender lambs in his arms, and carry them gently in his bosom. ⁿ Such charity and tenderness is to be used, as the weakest christian, if sincere, may not be excluded nor discouraged. Severity of examination is to be avoided.

4. In case any through excessive fear, or other infirmity, be unable to make their personal relation of their spiritual estate in public, it is sufficient, that

^h Acts 8. 37. ^l John 3. 23. ⁱ John 14. 21, 23, 24.
¹ John 2. 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15, 29. & 3. 15. Matt. 7.
16, 20. Jam. 3. 17. ^j Matt. 3. 6. ^k Acts 19. 18.
^l Rom. 14. 1. ^m Matt. 12. 20. ⁿ Isaiah 40. 11.

the Elders having received private satisfaction, make relation thereof in public, before the church, they testifying their assents thereunto: this being the way that tendeth most unto edification. But whereas [some] persons are of greater abilities, there it is most expedient, that they make their relations and confessions personally with their own mouth, as David professeth of himself. o

5. A personal and public confession and declaring of God's manner of working upon the soul, is both lawful, expedient and useful, in sundry respects and upon sundry grounds. o Those three thousand, Acts 2. 37, 41. before they were admitted by the Apostles, did manifest that they were pricked at the heart by Peter's sermon, together with earnest desire to be delivered from their sins, which now wounded their consciences, and their ready receiving of the word of promise and exhortation. We are to be ready to render a reason of the hope that is in us, to every one that asketh us, p therefore we must be able and ready upon any occasion to declare and shew our repentance for sin, faith unfeigned, and effectual calling, because these are the reason of a well-grounded hope. q I have not hidden thy righteousness from the great congregation. Ps. 40. 10.

6. This profession of faith and repentance, as it

o Ps. 66. 16. Phil. 2. 11. Rom. 10. 10. p 1 Pet. 3. 15. q 2 Cor. 7. 10. 1 Pet. 4. 3. Heb. 11. 1. Eph. 1. 18.

must be made by such at their admission, that were never in church society before; so nothing hindereth but the same way also be performed by such as have formerly been members of some other church, and the church to which they now join themselves as members, may lawfully require the same. Those three thousand, Acts 2. which made their confession, were members of the church of the Jews before; so were those that were baptized by John. ^r Churches may err in their admission; ^s and persons regularly admitted may fall into offence. ^t Otherwise, if churches might obtrude their members, or if church-members might obtrude themselves upon other churches without due trial, the matter so requiring, both the liberty of churches would thereby be infringed, in that they might not examine those, concerning whose fitness for communion they were unsatisfied: and besides the infringing of their liberty, the churches themselves would unavoidably be corrupted, and the ordinances defiled, whilst they might not refuse, but must receive the unworthy: which is contrary unto the scripture, teaching that all churches are sisters, and therefore equal. ^u

7. The like trial is to be required from such members of the church as were born in the same, *or received their membership, or were baptized in their*

^r Matt. 3. 5, 6. ^s 1 Cor. 5. 1, to. 5 Gal. 2. 4. ^t 1 Tim. 5. 20, 24. ^u Cant. 8. 8. Col. 4. 15, 16. Gal. 1. 2. with 3. 28.

infancy or minority, by virtue of the covenant of their parents, [if] when being grown up into years of discretion, they shall desire to be made partakers of the Lord's supper: unto which, because holy things must not be given to the unworthy, v therefore it is requisite that these as well as others, should come to their trial and examination, and manifest their faith and repentance by an open profession thereof, before they are received to the Lord's supper; and otherwise not to be admitted thereunto. w Yet these church-members that *were so born or received* in their childhood, before they are capable of being made partakers of full communion, have many privileges which others (not church members) have not. They are in Covenant with God, have the seal thereof upon them, viz. baptism, and so, if not regenerated, yet are in a more hopeful way of attaining regenerating grace, and all the spiritual blessings both of the covenant and seal. They are also under Church-watch, and consequently subject to the reprehensions, admonitions, and censures thereof, for their healing and amendment, as need shall require.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of church-members, their removal from one church to another, and of recommendation and dismissal.

1. Church-members may not remove or depart

v Matt. 7. 6. w 1 Cor. 11. 27.

from the church, and so one from another as they please, nor without just and weighty cause, but ought to live and dwell together, forasmuch as they are commanded not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. ^a Such departure tends to the dissolution and ruin of the Body, as the pulling of stones and pieces of timber from the building, and of members from the natural body tend to the destruction of the whole.

2. It is, therefore, the duty of church-members, in such times and places, where counsel may be had, to consult with the church whereof they are members, about their removal, that accordingly, they having their approbation, may be encouraged, or otherwise desist. They who are joined with consent, should not depart without consent, except forced thereunto. ^b

3. If a member's departure be manifestly *unsafe* and *sinful*, the church may not consent thereunto; for, in so doing, they should not act in faith, ^c and should partake with him in his sin. ^d If the case be doubtful and the person not to be persuaded, it seemeth best to leave the matter unto God, and not forcibly to detain him. ^e

4. *Just reasons* for a member's removal of himself from the church, are, 1. If a man cannot con-

^a Heb. 10. 25. ^b Prov. 11. 16. Acts 4. 32. Acts. 2. 44, 46. 1 Cor. 1. 10. ^c Rom. 14. 23. Heb. 11. 6. & 1 Tim. 5. 22. ^e Acts 21. 14.

tinue without partaking in sin. f 2. In case of personal persecution: so Paul, departed from the disciples at Damascus, g also in case of general persecution, when all are scattered. h 3. In case of real, and not only pretended want of competent subsistence, a door, being opened for better supply in another place, together with the means of spiritual edification. i In these, or like cases, a member may lawfully remove, and the church cannot lawfully detain him.

5. To separate from a church either out of contempt of their holy fellowship, j or out of covetousness, or for greater enlargements, with just grief to the church, k or out of schism, or want of love, and out of a spirit of contention in respect of some unkindness, l or some evil only conceived, or indeed in the church, which might and should be tolerated and healed with a spirit of meekness, m and of which evil the church is not yet convinced (though perhaps himself be) nor admonished: for these or the like reasons to withdraw from public communion in word or seals, or censures, is *unlawful and sinful*.

6. Such members as have orderly removed their habitation, ought to join themselves unto the church in order, where they do inhabit, if it may be; other-

f Eph. 5. 11. 2 Cor. 6. 17. g Acts 9. 25, 29, 30.
 h Acts 8. 1. i Neh. 13. 20. j 1 Cor. 15. 33. Rom.
 12. 2. k 2 Tim. 4. 10. Jude 19. l 1 Peter 5. 5.
 Luke 17. 3. m 1 Cor. 13. 4, 5. Eph. 4. 31, 32. Col.
 3. 12, 13.

wise they can neither perform the duties, nor receive the privileges of members. ⁿ Such an example tolerated in some, is apt to corrupt others, which if many should follow, would threaten the dissolution and confusion of churches, contrary to the scripture. ^o

7. Order requires that a member thus removing, have *letters testimonial and of dismissal* from the church, whereof he yet is, unto the church whereunto he desireth to be joined, lest the church should be deluded; that the church may receive him in faith, and not be corrupted in receiving deceivers and false brethren. ^p Until the person dismissed be received into another church, he ceaseth not by his letters of dismissal to be a member of the church whereof he was. The church cannot make a member no member, but by excommunication.

8. If a member be called to remove only for a time, where a church is, letters of recommendation are requisite and sufficient for communion with that church, in the ordinances, and in their watch; as Phæbe a servant of the church at Cenchrea, had a letter written for her to the church at Rome, that she might be received as becometh saints. ^q

9. Such letters of recommendation and dismissal, were written for Apollos, ^r for Marcus to the Co-

ⁿ Isaiah 56. 8. Acts 9. 26, to 28. ^o 1 Cor. 14. 33. Rom. 15. 7. ^p Acts 18. 27. ^q Rom. 16. 1, 2. 2 Cor. 3. 1. ^r Acts 18. 27.

lossians, s for Phæbe to the Romans, t for sundry other churches. u And the Apostle tells us that some persons, not sufficiently known otherwise, have special need of such letters, though he, for his part, had no need thereof. u The use of them is to be a benefit and help to the party for whom they are written, and for the furthering of his receiving among the saints, in the place whereto he goeth, and the due satisfaction of them in their receiving of him.

CHAPTER XIV.

Of excommunication and other censures.

1. The Censures of the Church are appointed by Christ for the preventing; a removing and healing, of offences in the church; b for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; c for the deterring others from the like offences; d for purging out the leaven which may infect the whole lump; e for vindicating the honour of Christ and of his church, and the holy profession of the gospel; f and for preventing of the wrath of God, that may justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders. g

s Col. 4. 10. t Rom. 16. 1. u 2 Cor. 3. 1. a 1 Tim. 5. 20. 2 Tim. 4. 2. Tit. 1. 13. 1 Thess. 5. 14.
 b 1 Tim. 1. 19, 20. Tit. 3. 10, 11. c 2 Cor. 2. 6, 7, 8. Gal. 6. 1. Jam. 5. 16. d Deut. 13. 11. 1 Tim. 5. 20.
 e 1 Cor. 5. 6, 7. f Rom. 2. 24. g Rev. 2. 14, 15, 16, 20.

2. If an offence be *private* (one brother offending another) the offender is to go and acknowledge his repentance for it unto his offended brother, who is then to forgive him.^h But if the offender neglect or refuse to do it, the brother offended is to go, and convince and admonish him of it, between themselves privately; ⁱ if therefore the offender be brought to repent of his offence, the admonisher has won his brother. But if the offender hear not his brother, the brother offended is to take with him one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established, (whether the word of admonition, if the offender receive it; or the word of complaint if he refuse it.)^j For if he refuse it, the offended brother is by the mouth of the Elders to tell the church, and if he hear the church, and declare the same by penitent confession, he is recovered and gained.^k And if the church discern him to be willing to hear, yet not fully convinced of his offence, as in case of heresy, they are to dispense to him a public admonition: which declaring the offender to lie under the public offence of the church, doth thereby withhold or suspend him from the holy fellowship of the Lord's supper, till his offence be removed by penitent confession. If he still continue obstinate, they are to cast him out by excommunication.

h Matt. 5. 23, 24. Luke 17. 3, 4. i Matt. 18. 15.
j ver. 16. 1 Tim. 5. 19. 2 Cor. 13. 1. Deut. 19. 15.
k Matt. 18. 17.

3. But if the offence be more *public* at first, and of a more heinous and criminal nature, to wit, such as are condemned by the light of nature; then the church without such gradual proceeding, is to cast out the offender from their holy communion, for the further mortifying of his sin, and the healing of his soul in the day of the Lord Jesus. ^l

4. In dealing with an offender, great *care* is to be taken, that we be neither over strict or rigorous, nor too indulgent or remiss: ^m our proceeding herein ought to be with a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted, ⁿ and that the best of us have need of much forgiveness from the Lord. ^o Yet the winning and healing of the offender's soul being the end of these endeavours; we must not daub with untempered mortar, nor heal the wounds of our brethren slightly. ^p On some have compassion; others save with fear. ^q

5. While the offender remains excommunicate, the church is to refrain from all member-like communion with him in spiritual things, ^r and also from all familiar communion with him in civil things, ^r farther than the necessity of natural or domestical or civil relations do require; and are therefore to forbear to eat and drink with him, that he may be ashamed. ^s

^l 1 Cor. 5. 1, 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 13. ^m 1 Tim. 5. 19. ² Cor. 13. 1. ⁿ Gal. 6. 1. ^o Matt. 18. 34, 35. ^p Ezek. 13. 10. ^q Jude 22. 23. ^r Matt. 18. 17. ^s 1 Cor. 5. 11. ² Thess. 3. 6, 14.

6. Excommunication being a spiritual punishment, it doth not prejudice the excommunicate in, or deprive him of his civil rights, and therefore toucheth not Princes or Magistrates in respect of their civil dignity or authority: and the excommunicate being but as a publican, and a heathen, heathens being lawfully permitted to hear the word in church-assemblies, we acknowledge therefore the like liberty of hearing the word, may be permitted to persons excommunicate, that is permitted unto heathen. ^t And because we are not without hope of his recovery, we are not to account him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother. ^u

7. If the Lord sanctify the censure to the offender, so as by the grace of Christ he doth testify his repentance with humble confession of his sin, and judging of himself, giving glory unto God, the church is then to forgive him, and to comfort him, and to restore him to the wonted brotherly communion, which formerly he enjoyed with them. ^w

8. The suffering of profane or scandalous livers, to continue in fellowship, and partake in the sacraments, is doubtless a great sin in those that have power in their hands to redress it, and do it not. ^x Nev-

^t 1 Cor. 14. 24, 25. ^u 2 Thess. 3. 14, 15. ^w 2 Cor. 2. 7, 8. ^x Rev. 2. & 3. chap.

ertheless, insomuch as Christ, and his Apostles in their times, and the Prophets and other godly men in theirs, did lawfully partake of the Lord's commanded ordinances in the Jewish church, and neither taught nor practised separation from the same, though unworthy ones were permitted therein; y and inas-much as the faithful in the church of Corinth, wherein were many unworthy persons and practi-ces, z are never commanded to absent themselves from the sacraments, because of the same; therefore the godly, in like cases, are not to separate.

9. As separation from such a church wherein pro-fane and scandalous persons are tolerated, is not pre-sently necessary; a so for the members thereof, other-wise worthy, hereupon to abstain from communi-cating with such a church in the participation of the sacraments, is unlawful. For as it were unreasona-ble for an innocent person to be punished for the faults of others, wherein he hath no hand, and where-unto he gave no consent: b so is it more unreasona-ble, that a godly man should neglect duty, and punish himself, in not coming for his portion in the blessing of the seals, as he ought, because others are suffered to come that ought not; especially considering that himself doth neither consent to their sin, nor to their approaching to the ordinance in their sin, nor to the

y Matt. 23. 3. Acts 3. 1. z 1 Cor. 5. & 6th. chap. & 15. 12.
a 2 Chron. 30. 18. b Gen. 18. 25.

neglect of others, who should put them away, and do not, but, on the contrary, doth heartily mourn for these things, modestly and seasonably stir up others to do their duty. ^c If the church cannot be reformed, they may use their liberty, as is specified, Chap. 13. Sect. 4. But this all the godly are bound unto, even every one to his endeavour, according to his power and place, that the unworthy may be duly proceeded against by the church, to whom this matter doth pertain.

CHAPTER XV.

Of the communion of churches one with another.

1. Although churches be distinct, ^d and therefore may not be confounded one with another, and equal, ^e and therefore have not dominion one over another: yet all the churches ought to preserve church-communion one with another, beause they are all united unto Christ, not only as a mystical, ^f but as a political Head: ^g whence is derived a communion suitable thereunto.

2. The communion of churches is exercised several ways. (1.) By way of *mutual care* in taking thought for one another's welfare. ^h (2.) By way of *consultation* one with another, when we have occasion to re-

^c Ezek. 9. 4. ^d Rev. 1. 4. ^e Cant. 8. 8. Rom. 16. 16. 1 Cor. 16. 19. Acts 15. 23. ^f Rev. 2. 1. ^g Eph. 1. 22. ^h Col. 4. 15, 16. 1 Cor. 16. 19, 20.

quire the judgment and counsel of other churches, touching any person or cause, wherewith they may be better acquainted than ourselves. As the church of Antioch consulted with the Apostles and Elders of the church at Jerusalem, about the question of circumcision of the Gentiles, and about the false teachers that breached that doctrine. ^d In which case when any church wanteth light or peace among themselves, it is a way of communion of churches, according to the word, to meet together by their Elders and other messengers in a Synod, to consider and argue the point in doubt or difference. ^e And having found out the way of truth and peace, to commend the same by their Letters and Messengers to the churches whom the same may concern. ^f But if a church be rent with divisions among themselves; or lie under any open scandal, and yet refuse to consult with other churches, for healing or removing of the same, it is matter of just offence both to the Lord Jesus, and to other churches, as betraying too much want of mercy and faithfulness, not to seek to bind up the breaches and wounds of the church and brethren. ^g And therefore the state of such a church calleth aloud upon other churches, to exercise a fuller act of brotherly communion, to wit, by way of admonition. (3.) A way, then, of communion of churches is by way of *admonition*; to wit, in case any public offence be found

^d Acts 15. 2. ^e Ver. 6, to 21. ^f Ver. 22, to 29. ^g Ezek. 34. 4.

in a church, which they either discern not, or are slow in proceeding to use the means for the removing and healing of. Paul had no authority over Peter, yet when he saw Peter not walking with a right foot, he publicly rebuked him before the church. g

Though churches have no more authority one over another, than one Apostle had over another, yet as one Apostle might admonish another, so may one church admonish another, and yet without usurpation. In which case, if the church, that lieth under offence, do not hearken to the church that doth admonish her, the church is to acquaint other neighbour churches with that offence, which the offending church still lieth under, together with the neglect of their brotherly admonition given unto them: whereupon those other churches are to join in seconding the admonition formerly given. And if still the offending church continue in obstinacy and impenitency, they may forbear communion with them, and are to proceed to make use of the help of a synod, or council of neighbour churches, walking orderly (if a greater cannot conveniently be had) for their conviction. If they hear not the synod, the synod having declared them to be obstinate, particular churches accepting and approving of the judgment of the synod, are to declare the sentence of non-communion respectively

g Gal, 2. 11, to 14.

concerning them. And thereupon out of religious care to keep their own communion pure, they may justly withdraw themselves from participation wth them at the Lord's table, and from such other acts of holy communion, as the communion of churches doth otherwise allow and require. ^h Nevertheless, if any members, of such a church as live under publie offence, do not consent to the offence of the church, but do in due sort bear witness against it, they are still to be received to wonted communion, for it is not equal that the innocent should suffer with the offensive. ⁱ Yea, furthermore, if such innocent members, after due waiting in the use of all due means for the healing of the offence of their own church, shall at last (with the allowance of the counsel of neighbour-churches) withdraw from the fellowship of their own church, and offer themselves to the fellowship of another, we judge it lawful for the other church to receive them (being otherwise fit) as if they had been orderly dismissed to them from their own church. (4.) A fourth way of communion with churches is by way of *participation*; the members of one church occasionally coming to another, we willingly admit them to partake with them at the Lord's table, it being the seal of our communion not only with Christ, nor only with the members of our own church, but also of all the churches of the saints. ^j In which re-

^h Matt. 18. 15, 16, 17. by proportion.
^j 1 Cor. 12. 13.

ⁱ Gen. 18. 25.

gard we refuse not to baptize their children presented to us, if either their own minister be absent, or such a fruit of holy fellowship be desired with us. In like cases such churches as are furnished with more ministers than one, do willingly afford one of their own ministers to supply the absence or place of a sick minister of another church for a needful season.

(5.) A fifth way of church communion is by *recommendation*, when the member of one church hath occasion to reside in another church, if but for a season, we commend him to their watchful fellowship by letters of recommendation. : k but if he be called to settle his abode there, we commit him according to his desire, to the fellowship of their covenant by letters of dismissal. ^l (6.) A sixth way of church-communion, is in case of need to minister *succour* one unto another, either of able members to furnish them with officers, ^m or of outward support to the necessities of poorer churches, as did the churches of the Gentiles contribute liberally to the poor saints at Jerusalem. ⁿ

3. When a company of believers purpose to gather unto church-fellowship, it is requisite for their safer proceeding and the maintaining of the communion of churches, that they signify their intent unto the neighbour-churches, which walk according to the order of the gospel, and desire their *presence and help*, and

^l Rom. 16. 1. ^l Acts 18. 27. ^m Acts 11. 22, to 24. ⁿ Vers. 29. Rom. 15. 26, 27.

right hand of fellowship; which they ought readily to give unto them, when there is no just cause to except against their proceedings. o

4. Besides these several ways of communion, there is also a way of *propagation* of churches: when a church shall grow too numerous, it is a way, and fit season to propagate one church out of another, by sending forth such of their members, as are willing to remove, and to procure some officers to them, as may enter with them into church-estate among themselves. p As bees, when the hive is too full, issue out by swarms, and are gathered into other hives, so the churches of Christ may do the same upon the like necessity; and therein hold forth to them the right hand of fellowship, both in their gathering into a church, and in the ordination of their officers.

CHAPTER XVI.

Of Synods

1. Synods orderly assembled, and rightly proceeding according to the pattern, Acts 15. we acknowledge as the ordinance of Christ: a and though not absolutely necessary to the being, yet many times, through the iniquity of men, and perverseness of times, necessary to the *well-being* of churches, for the establishment of truth and peace therein.

o Gal. 2. 1, 2. 9. by proportion. p Isaiah 40. 20. Cant. 8. 8, 9. a Acts 15. 2, to 21.

2. Synods being spiritual and ecclesiastical assemblies, are therefore made up of spiritual and ecclesiastical causes. The next efficient cause of them under Christ, is the power of the churches, sending forth their Elders and other messengers, who being met together in the name of Christ, are the matter of a Synod; ^b and they, in arguing and debating and determining matters of religion, according to the word, ^c and publishing the same to the churches it concerneth, do put forth the proper and formal acts of a Synod, ^d to the conviction of errors and heresies, and the establishment of truth and peace in the churches, which is the end of a Synod. ^e

3. Magistrates have *power* to call a Synod, by calling to the churches to send forth their Elders and other messengers, to counsel and assist them in matters of religion; ^{† f} but yet, the constituting of a Synod is a church-act, and may be transacted by the churches, even when civil magistrates may be enemies to churches and to church-assemblies, ^g

[†] Where shall we find an example for this in the New Testament? All the Magistrates in the times of the Apostles, were Jews or Heathens, and their arm could not be wanted to support the ark of God. Christianity neither asks nor needs the interference of ANY secular authority.

^b Acts 15. 2, 3. ^c Ver. 6, to 21. ^d Ver. 22, to 29
^e Ver. 30, 31. Acts 16. 4, 5. ^f 2 Chron. 29. 4, 5, to 11.
^g Acts 15.

4. It belongeth unto Synods and Councils, to debate and determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; ^h to clear from the word, holy directions for the holy worship of God, and good government of the church; to bear witness against mal-administration and corruption in doctrine or manners, in any particular church; ⁱ and to give directions for the reformation thereof: ^j Not to exercise church-censures in way of discipline, nor any other act of church-authority or jurisdiction, which that presidential Synod did forbear.

5. The Synod's directions and determinations, so far as consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement therewith, (which is the principal ground thereof, and without which they bind not at all,) but also secondarily, for the Power, whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his word. ^k

6. Because it is difficult, if not impossible for many churches to come together in one place, in their members universally; therefore they may assemble by their *Delegates* or *Messengers*, as the church at Antioch went not all to Jerusalem, but some select men for that purpose. ^m Because none are, or should be more fit to know the state of the churches, nor to

^h Acts 15. 1, 2, 6, 7.

ⁱ 1 Chron. 15. 13. ² Chron. 29. 6, 7.

28, 29.

^k Acts 15.

^j Acts 15. 24,

advise of ways for the good thereof than Elders; therefore it is fit, that in the choice of the messengers for such assemblies, they have special respect unto such. Yet, inasmuch, as not only Paul and Barnabas, but certain others also, were sent to Jerusalem, from Antioch, ⁿ and when they were come to Jerusalem not only the Apostles and Elders, but other brethren ^o also, do assemble and meet about the matter. Therefore Synods are to consist both of Elders and other church-members, endued with gifts, and sent by the churches, not excluding the presence of any brethren in the churches.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of the civil Magistrate's power, in matters ecclesiastical.

It is lawful, profitable and necessary for christians to gather themselves together into church-estate, and therein to exercise all the ordinances of Christ, according unto the word: altho' the consent of the Magistrate could *not* be had thereunto; a because the Apostles and christians in their time; did frequently thus practice, when the Magistrates being all of them Jewish and Pagan, and most persecuting enemies, would give no countenance or consent to such matters. b

n Acts 15. 2. o Ver. 22, 23. a Acts 2. 41, to 47.
b Acts 4. 1. 2, 3, 4.

2. Church-government stands in *no* opposition to civil government of commonwealths, nor any way intrencheth upon the authority of civil Magistrates, in their jurisdictions; nor any whit weakeneth their hands in governing, but rather strengtheneth them, and furthereth the people in yielding more hearty and conscionable obedience to them, whatsoever some ill-affected persons to the ways of Christ have suggested, to alienate the affections of Kings and Princes from the ordinances of Christ. As if the kingdom of Christ in his church, could not rise and stand, without the falling and weakening of their government, which is also of Christ. Whereas the contrary is most true, that they may both stand together and flourish, the one being helpful unto the other, in their distinct and due administrations. *c*

3. The power and authority of Magistrates is *not* for the restraining of churches, or any other good works, but for helping in and furthering thereof; *d* and therefore the consent and countenance of Magistrates, when it may be had, is not to be slighted, or lightly esteemed. But, on the contrary, it is part of that honour due to christian Magistrates, to desire and crave their consent and approbation therein; which being obtained, the churches may then proceed in their way, with much more encouragement and comfort. *e*

c Isaiah 49. 23. *d* Rom. 13. 4. *e* 1 Tim. 2. 2.

4. It is *not* in the power of Magistrates to compel their subjects to become church-members, and to partake of the Lord's supper, for the priests are re-proved, that brought unworthy ones into the sanctuary. *f* Then, it was unlawful for the Priests, so it is as unlawful to be done by civil Magistrates, those whom the church is to cast out, if they were in, the Magistrate ought not to thrust them into the church, nor to hold them therein. *g*

5. As it is *unlawful* for church-officers to meddle with the sword of the Magistrate; *h* so it is unlawful for the Magistrate to meddle with the work proper to church-officers. The acts of Moses and David, who were not only Princes, but Prophets, were extraordinary, therefore not imitable. Against such usurpation the Lord witnessed by smiting Uzziah with leprosy, for presuming to offer incense. *i*

6. It is the *duty* of the Magistrate to take care of matters of religion,* and to improve his civil authority for the observing of the duties commanded in the first, as well as for observing of the duties commanded in

* If it is the duty of one Magistrate to take care of matters of religion, it must be the duty of all; and so it must be the duty of the Chief Magistrate. And thus by the admission of this principle, we must justify an establishment with all its corruptions, than which, nothing appears more opposite to the nature of christianity.

f Ezek. 44. 7, 9. *g* 1 Cor. 5. 11. *h* Matt. 20. 25, 26. *i* 2 Chron. 26. 16, to 21.

the second table. They are called Gods. j The end of the Magistrate's office is not only the quiet and peaceable life of the subject in matters of righteousness and honesty, but also in matters of godliness, yea, of all godliness. k Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, are much commended by the Holy Ghost, for the putting forth their authority in matters of religion. On the contrary, such Kings as have been failing this way, are frequently taxed and reprov'd by the Lord. l And not only the Kings of Juda, but also Job, m Nehemiah, n the King of Nineveh, o Darius, Artaxerxes, p Nebuchadnezzar, q whom none looked at as types of Christ, (tho' were it so, there were no place for any just objection) are commended in the books of God, for exercising their authority this way. †

† To justify what they had asserted in the beginning of this section, viz. "it is the duty of the Magistrate to take care of matters of religion," the authors have fallen into the common error, in reasoning on this point. They seem to have entirely forgotten or neglected to notice, that the Jewish state was a THEOCRACY, and therefore not a pattern to any other. It appears to afford no little proof of the confused notions which prevailed in the minds of these otherwise excellent Authors, on this subject, that we see them here adducing Moses and David as examples under the Gospel dispensation, yet in Sect. 5. of this Chap. they have declared "the acts of Moses and David were extraordinary, therefore not imitable." These confused statements on this subject, are by no means peculiar to the Authors of the Platform. Whoever attempts thus to blend civil and sacred things, will find the same difficulty.

j Psalm 82. 1, 6. k 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2. l 2 Kings 12. 3. & 14. 4. & 15. 35. m Job 29. 25. & 31. 26, 27, 28. n Neh. 13. o Jonah 3. 6, to 9. p Ezra ch. 6. & 7. q Dan. 3. 28, 29.

7. The *objects* of the power of the Magistrate are not things merely inward, and so not subject to his cognizance and view, as unbelief, hardness of heart, erroneous opinions not vented; but only such things as are acted by the *outward man*. Neither [is] their power to be exercised in commanding such acts of the outward man, and punishing the neglect thereof, as are but mere inventions and devices of men, but about such acts as are commanded and forbidden in the word. ^r Yea, such as the word doth clearly determine, though not always clearly to the judgment of the Magistrate or others, yet clearly in itself. In these he of right, ought to put forth his authority, though oft-times actually he doth it not.

8. Idolatry, ^s blasphemy, ^t heresy, ^u venting corrupt and pernicious opinions, that destroy the foundation; open contempt of the word preached; prophanation of the Lord's day; disturbing the peaceable administration and exercise of the worship and holy things of God, ^w and the like, are to be restrained and punished by civil authority. ^x

9. If any church, one or more, shall grow schismatical, rending itself, from the communion of other churches, or shall walk incorrigibly and obstinately, in any corrupt way of their own, contrary to the rule

^r 1 Kings 20. 28, 42. ^s Deut. 13.
^t 1 Kings 20. 28, 42. ^u Zech. 13. 3.
^w Neh. 13. 15, to 31 ^x 1 Tim. 2. 2. Rom. 13. 4.

of the word; in such case, the Magistrate is to put forth his coercive power, as the matter shall require. The tribes on this side Jordan intended to make war against the other tribes, for building the altar of witness, whom they suspected to have turned away therein from following of the Lord. y*

* See Notes to pages 53 & 54; and note [D] at the end of the book.
y Josh. 22.

END OF THE PLATFORM.

THE
 PRINCIPLES OWNED,
 AND THE
ENDEAVOURS USED,
 BY THE
Churches of New England;
 CONCERNING THE CHURCH-STATE OF
 THEIR POSTERITY.

~~~~~  
 Si Ecclesia debet unquam Reflorescere, necesse est, at à pu-  
 erorum Institutione Exordium fiat. LUTHER.  
 ~~~~~

1. As the English nation has been honoured above most of the protestant and reformed world, with clearer discoveries of several most considerable points in our christian religion; particularly the points of a true evangelical church-order; so the New English part of this nation hath had a singular share in receiving and imparting the illuminations. which the light shining in a dark place hath given thereabout. Very true and just are the printed words of the well known Mr. Nathaniel Mather, on this occasion.

‘ Amongst all that have suffered for, and search-
 ‘ ed into these truths, they of New England, justly
 ‘ deserve and will have a name and a glory, as long

‘ as the earth shall have any remembrance of an
‘ English nation. After-ages will honour them for
‘ that great and high adventure of theirs, in trans-
‘ porting themselves, their wives and little ones, up-
‘ on the rude waves of the vast ocean into a remote,
‘ desolate and howling wilderness, and there encoun-
‘ tering by faith and patience, with a world of temp-
‘ tations and straits and pressing wants and difficul-
‘ ties and this upon no other inducements, but that
‘ they might meet with him whom their souls loved,
‘ in the midst of his golden candlesticks, and see him,
‘ as they have there seen him in his sanctuary. It
might rationally be now expected, that our compas-
sionate Lord Jesus Christ would graciously gratify
the desires and labours of such an holy generation
with as full an understanding of his revealed will a-
bout his instituted worship, as he has at any time
granted unto any of his people; and that especially
the officers of instituted churches humbly, prayerful-
ly and carefully engaged in studies for their service,
would lie under as direct an influence of his holy
spirit, as any inquirers whatsoever. But there is
one very important article of ecclesiastical discipline
whereabouts the churches of New England have had
a most peculiar exercise and concernment; and that
is *the ecclesiastical state of their posterity.*

2. When our churches were come to between twenty
and thirty years of age, a numerous posterity was ad-
vanced so far into the world, that the first planters be-

gan apace in their several families, to be distinguished by the name of grand-fathers: but among the immediate parents of grand-children, there were multitudes of well disposed persons, who partly through their own doubts and fears, and partly through other culpable neglects, had not actually come up to the covenanting state of communicants at the table of the Lord. The good old generation could not without many uncomfortable apprehensions, behold their offspring excluded from the baptism of christianity, and from the *ecclesiastical inspection* which is to accompany that baptism; indeed it was to leave their offspring under the Shepherdly government of our Lord Jesus Christ in his ordinances, that they had brought their lambs into this wilderness. When the Apostle bids churches to look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, there is an ecclesiastical word used for that looking diligently; intimating that God will ordinarily bless a regular church-watch, to maintain the interests of grace among his people: and it was therefore the study of those prudent men, who might be called our seers, that the children of the faithful may be kept as far as may be, under a church-watch, in expectation that they might be in the fairer way to receive the grace of God; thus they were looking diligently, that the prosperous and prevailing condition of religion in our churches might not be *Res unius ætatis* a matter of one age alone. Moreover, among the next sons or daughters descending from that generation, there was a numerous appearance of sober

persons, who professed themselves desirous to renew their baptismal covenant, and submit unto the church discipline, and so have their houses also marked for the Lord's; but yet they could not come up to that experimental account of their own regeneration, which would sufficiently embolden their access to the other sacrament. Wherefore, for our churches now to make no ecclesiastical difference between these hopeful candidates and competents for those our further mysteries; and pagans, who might happen to hear the word of God in our assemblies; was judged a most unwarrantable strictness, which would quickly abandon the biggest part of our country unto heathenism. And on the other side, it was feared, that if all such, as had not yet exposed themselves by censurable scandals found upon them, should be admitted unto *all* the privileges in our churches, a worldly part of mankind might, before we are aware, carry all things into such a course of proceeding, as would be very disagreeable unto the kingdom of heaven.

3. The questions raised about these matters, came to some figure first, in the colony of Connecticut; where the pious magistrates observing the begun dangers of paroxysms, which might affect the state as well as the church, on this occasion, procured a draught of the agitated questions, and sent them to the magistrates of the Massachuset's colony, with a request, that several of the ablest ministers, in both colonies might upon mature deliberation, give in their

answers thereunto. Accordingly, the letters of the government, procured an assembly of our principal ministers at Boston on June 4, 1657, who by the 19th, of that month prepared and presented an elaborate answer to twenty one questions; which was afterwards printed in London, under the title of, "A disputation concerning church members and their children." Besides, other cases relating to the church state of children born in the bosom of the church, it is in this disputation asserted and maintained, ' That it is the
' duty of infants, who confederate in their parents.
' when grown up unto years of discretion, though not
' yet fit for the Lord's supper, to own the covenant
' they made with their parents, by entering thereinto,
' in their own persons; and it is the duty of the church
' to call upon them for the performance thereof; and
' if being called upon, they shall refuse the perform-
' ance of this great duty, or otherwise to continue
' scandalous, they are liable to be censured for the
' same, by the church. And in case they understand
' the grounds of religion, and are not scandalous, and
' solemnly own the covenant in their own persons,
' wherein they give up both themselves and their
' children unto the Lord, and desire baptism for
' them, we see not sufficient cause to deny baptism
' unto their children.

4. The practice of church-care, about the children of our churches, thus directed and commended, was

but gradually introduced; yea, it met with such opposition as could not be encountered with any thing less than a Synod of elders and messengers, from all the churches in the Massachuset colony. Accordingly, the general court, having the necessity of the matter laid before them, at their second session in the year 1661, issued out their desire and order for the convening of such a Synod at Boston in the spring of the year ensuing. And for the deliberations of that synod, besides the grand question about *the subject of Baptism*, there was another question propounded about *the consociation of churches*, which was of no small consequence to the interests of christianity in the country. As the Divines of New England were solicitous that the propagation of our churches might hold pace with that of our offspring, so they were industrious for the combination of our churches into such a bundle of arrows, as might not easily be broken. However, they had by their adversaries been termed Independents, nevertheless they solemnly, on this occasion, repeated and subscribed, that profession of their famous brethren in the English nation; ‘ That it is the most to
‘ be abhorred maxim, that any religion hath made
‘ profession of, and therefore of all other the most
‘ contradictory, and dishonourable unto that of christianity, that a single and particular society of men,
‘ professing the name of Christ, and pretending to be endowed with a power from Christ, to judge

‘ them that are of the same body and society with
 ‘ themselves, should further arrogate to themselves an
 ‘ exemption from giving account, or being censura-
 ‘ ble by any other, either christian Magistrate above
 ‘ them, or neighbour churches about them. Under
 the influence of these concernments, the Elders and
 messengers of the churches assembled at Boston, in
 the year 1662, who under the conduct of several suc-
 cessive Moderators, at length agreed upon certain
 propositions; which being tendered unto the general
 court, there was an order there passed on October
 8th, 1662, for the publication and commendation
 thereof unto all the churches in the jurisdiction.
 They were as followeth.

THE ANSWER

OF THE ELDERS AND OTHER MESSENGERS OF THE
 CHURCHES, ASSEMBLED AT BOSTON, IN THE YEAR
 1662; TO THE QUESTIONS PROPOUNDED TO THEM,
 BY ORDER OF THE HONOURED GENERAL COURT.

QUESTION I.

Who are the subjects of Baptism?

ANSWER.

The answer may be given in the following propo-
 sitions, briefly confirmed from the scriptures.

1. ‘ They that, according to scripture are mem-
 ‘ bers of the visible church, are the subjects of baptism.
2. ‘ The members of the visible church, according

‘ to scripture, are confederate visible believers, in particular churches, and their infant seed, i. e. children in minority, whose next parents, one or both, are in covenant.

3. ‘ The infant seed of confederate visible believers, are members of the same church with their parents, and when grown up are personally under the watch, discipline and government of that church.

4. ‘ These adult persons, are not therefore to be admitted to full communion, merely because they are, and continue members, without such further qualifications as the word of God requireth thereunto.

5 ‘ Church members who were admitted in minority, understanding the doctrine of faith, and publicly professing their assent thereto; not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the covenant before the church, wherein they give up themselves and their children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church, their children are to be baptized.

6. ‘ Such church members, who either by death or some other extraordinary providence, have been inevitably hindered from public acting as aforesaid yet have given the church cause in judgment of charity, to look at them as so qualified, and such as had they been called thereunto, would have so acted, their children are to be baptized.

7. ‘ The members of orthodox churches being
‘ sound in the faith and not scandalous in life, and
‘ presenting due testimony thereof, these occasionally
‘ coming from one church to another may have their
‘ children baptized in the church whither they come,
‘ by virtue of communion of churches: but if they
‘ remove their habitation, they ought orderly to cov-
‘ enant and subject themselves to the government of
‘ Christ in the church where they settle their abode
‘ and so their children to be baptized; it being the
‘ church’s duty to receive such into communion so
‘ far, as they are regularly fit for the same.

The confirmation of these propositions from the scriptures, followeth.

PROPOSITION I.

They that according to scripture, are members of the visible church, are the subjects of Baptism.

The truth may appear from the following evidences from the word of God.

1. When Christ saith, Go ye therefore and teach, or (as the Greek is) disciple all nations, baptizing them, Matt. 28. 19, he expresseth the adequate subject of baptism, to be *disciples*, or *discipled ones*. But disciples there, is the same with members of the visible church. For the visible church is Christ’s school, wherein all the members stand related and subjected to him, as their master and teacher, and so

are his scholars or disciples, and under his teaching, as ver. 20. And it is that visible spiritual kingdom of Christ, which he there, from his kingly power, ver. 18, sendeth them to set up and administer, in ver. 19. The subjects whereof are under his laws and government, ver. 20. Which subjects (or members of that kingdom, i. e. of the visible church) are termed disciples, ver. 19. Also in the Acts of the Apostles, (the story of their accomplishment of that commission) disciples are usually put for members of the visible church. Acts 1. 15. In the midst of the disciples, who with others added to them, are called the church, Acts 2. 47. The members whereof are again called disciples, Acts 6. 1, 2. Acts 9. 1. Against the disciples of the Lord; i. e. against the church of God, 1 Cor. 15. 9. Gal. 1. 13. Acts 9. 26. He assayed to join himself to the disciples. The disciples of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, Acts 14. 21, 22, are called the church in each of those places, ver. 23. So the church, ver. 27, the disciples ver. 28. Acts 18. 22. The church at Cesarea; Acts 21. 16. The disciples of Cesarea: so Acts 18. 23. with chap. 15. 41, and Gal. 1. 2, Acts 18. 27, and chap. 20. 1. From all which it appeareth, that disciples in Matt. 28. 19, and members in the visible church, are terms equivalent, and disciples being there, by Christ himself made the subjects of baptism, it followeth, that the members of the visible church are the subjects of baptism.

2. Baptism is the seal of the first entrance into the visible church; as appeareth from those texts, 1 Cor. 12. 13, Baptized into one body, i. e. our entrance into the body or church of Christ, is sealed by baptism. And Rom. 6. 3, 5. Gal. 3. 27, where it is shewed that baptism is the sacrament of union, or of ingrafting into Christ the Head, and consequently into the church, his body; and from the Apostles' constant practice of baptizing persons upon their first coming in, or first giving up themselves to the Lord, and them; Acts 8. 12, and 16. 15, 33, and 18. 8, and Acts 2. 41, 42, they were baptized at their first adding to the church, or admission into the Apostles' fellowship, wherein they afterward continued. And from its answering to circumcision, which was a seal of initiation or admission into the church; hence it belongs to all, and only those that are entered into, that are within, or that are members of the visible church.

3. They that according to scripture are members of the visible church, are in covenant. For it is the covenant, that constituteth the church, Deut. 29. 12, 13. They must enter into covenant, that they might be established the people or church of God. Now the initiatory seal is affixed to the covenant, and appointed to run parallel therewith, Gen. 17. 7, 9, 10, 11. so circumcision was, and hence called the covenant, Gen. 17. 13. Acts 7. 8. And so baptism is, being in like manner annexed to the promise or covenant, Acts 2. 38, 39. and being the seal that answer-

eth to circumcision, Col. 2. 11, 12.

4. Christ doth sanctify and cleanse the church by the washing of water, i. e. by baptism, Eph. 5. 25, 26. Therefore the whole church, and so all the members thereof (who are also said in scripture to be sanctified in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. 1. 2.) are the subjects of baptism. And although it is the invisible church, unto the spiritual and eternal good whereof, this and all other ordinances lastly, have respect, and which the place mentioned in Eph. 5. may in a special manner look unto; yet it is the visible church that is the next and immediate subject of the administration thereof. For the subject of visible external ordinances to be administered by men, must needs be visible. And so the Apostle baptized sundry persons, who were of the visible, but not of the invisible church, as Simon Magus, Ananias and Sapphira, and others. And these are visibly purchased and sanctified by the blood of Christ, the blood of the covenant, Acts 20. 28. Heb. 10. 29. Therefore the visible seal of the covenant and of cleansing by Christ's blood belongs to them.

5. The circumcision is often put for the whole Jewish church, or for the members of the visible church under the Old Testament. Those within are expressed by the Circumcised, and those without by the Uncircumcised, Rom. 15. 8. and 3. 30. Eph. 2. 11. Judges 14. 3. & 15. 18. 1 Sam. 14. 6. & 17. 26, 36, Jer. 9. 25, 26. Hence by proportion baptism (which

is our gospel circumcision, Col. 2. 11, 12.) belongs to the whole visible church under the New Testament. Actual and personal circumcision, was indeed proper to the males of old, females being but inclusively and virtually circumcised and so counted of the circumcision: but the Lord has taken away that difference now, and appointed baptism to be personally applied to both sexes. Acts 8. 12. & 16. 15. Gal. 3. 28. So that every particular member of the visible church is now a subject of baptism. We conclude, therefore, that baptism pertains to the whole visible church, and to all and every one therein, and to no other.

PROPOSITION II.

The members of the visible church according to scripture, are confederate visible believers, in particular churches, and their infant seed, i. e. children in minority, whose next parents, one or both are in covenant.

Sundry particulars are comprised in this proposition, which we may consider and confirm distinctly.

Partic. 1. Adult persons, who are members of the visible church, are by rule confederate visible believers, Acts 5. 14. Believers were added to the Lord. The believing Corinthians were members of the church there, Acts 18. 8. with 1 Cor. 1. 2. and 12. 27. The inscription of the Epistles written to churches, and calling the members thereof saints and

faithful, shew the same thing, Eph. 1. 1. Phil. 1. 1. Col. 1. 2. And that consideration, i. e. covenanting explicit or implicit (the latter preserveth the essence of confederation, the former is duty and most desirable) is necessary to make one a member of the visible church, appears, (1) Because the church is constituted by covenant; for there is between Christ and the church, the mutual engagement and relation of king and subjects, husband and spouse; this cannot be, but by covenant (internal if you speak of the invisible church, external of the visible); a church is a company that can say, God is our God and we are his people, this is from the covenant between God and them. Deut. 29. 12, 13. Ezek. 16. 8. (2) The church of the Old Testament was the church of God by covenant, Gen. 17. Deut. 29. and was reformed still by the renewing of the covenant, 2 Chron. 15. 16. & 23. 12. & 34. 31, 32. Neh. 9. 38. Now the churches of the Gentiles under the New Testament stand upon the same basis or root, with the church of the Old Testament, and therefore are constituted by covenant, as that was, Rom. 11. 17, 18. Eph. 2. 11, 12, 19. & 3. 6. Heb. 8. 10. (3) Baptism enters us into the church sacramentally, i. e. by sealing the covenant. The covenant, therefore, is that which constitutes the church, and infers membership, and is the vow in baptism commonly spoken of.

Partic. 2. The members of the visible church are such as are confederate in particular churches. It may

be minded that we are here speaking of members so stated in the visible church as that they are subjects, to whom church ordinances may regularly be administered, and that according to ordinary dispensation. For were it granted, that the Apostles and Evangelists did sometimes baptize such, as were not members of any particular church, yet their extraordinary office, large power and commission renders them not imitable therein by ordinary officers. For then they might baptize in private, without the presence of a christian assembly, as Philip did the eunuch. But that in ordinary dispensation the members of the visible church, according to the scripture, are, such as are members of some particular church, appears, (1) Because the visible believer that professedly covenants with God doth therein give up himself to wait on God in all his ordinances, Deut. 26. 17, 18. Matt. 28. 19, 20. But all the ordinances of God are to be enjoyed only in a particular church. For how often do we find in the scripture that they came together into one place, (or met as a congregational particular church) for the observation and enjoyment of the ordinances, Acts 2. 1, 44, 46. & 4. 31. & 11. 26. and 20. 7. 1 Cor. 5. 4. & 11. 18. & 20. 33. & 14. 23. (2) The Apostle in his Epistles writing to saints or believers, writes to them as in particular churches, 1 Cor. 1. 2. Eph. 1. 1. Phil. 1. 1. Col. 1. 2. And when the story of the Acts speaks of disciples, other places shew that those are understood to be members

of particular churches, Acts 18. 23. with Gal. 1. 2. Acts 21. 16. with 18. 22. & 11. 26. & 14. 22, 23, 27, 28. All which shews that the scripture acknowledgeth no settled orderly estate of visible believers in covenant, with God, but only in particular churches. (3) The members of the visible church are disciples, as was above cleared, now disciples are under discipline, and liable to church censures; for they are stated subjects of Christ's laws and government, Mat. 28. 19, 20: but church government and censures are extant now in ordinary dispensation only in a particular church, Matt. 18. 17. I Cor. 5. 4.

Partic. 3. The infant-seed of confederate visible believers are also members of the visible church. The truth of this is evident from the scriptures and reasons following.

Argum. 1. The covenant of Abraham, as to the substance thereof, viz. That whereby God declares himself to be the God of the faithful and their seed, Gen. 17. 7. continues under the gospel, as appears. (1) Because the believing inchurched Gentiles under the New Testament, do stand upon the same root of covenanting Abraham; which the Jews were broken off from. Rom. 11. 16, 17, 18. (2) Because Abraham in regard of that covenant was made a father of many nations, Gen 17. 4, 5. even of Gentiles as well as Jews, under New Testament as well as Old. Rom. 4. 16, 17. Gal. 3. 29. i. e. in Abraham as a pattern and root, God not only sheweth how he justifies the

believer, Gal. 3. 6, 9. Rom. 4. but also conveyed that covenant to the faithful, and their seed in all nations, Luke 19. 9. If a son of Abraham, then salvation, i. e. the covenant dispensation of salvation is come to his house. (3) As that covenant was communicated to proselyte Gentiles under the new testament, so its communication to the inchurched Gentiles under the new testament is clearly held forth in divers places, Gal. 3. 14. The blessing of Abraham compriseth both the internal benefits of justification by faith, &c. which the Apostle is there treating of; and the external dispensation of grace in the visible church, to the faithful and their seed, Gen. 28. 4; but the whole blessing of Abraham (and so the whole covenant) is come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, Eph. 2. 12, 19. They had been strangers, but now were no more strangers from the covenants of promise, i. e. from the covenant of grace, which had often been renewed, especially with Abraham, and the house of Israel, and had been in the external dispensation of it, their peculiar portion. So that the Ephesians, who were afar off, being now called and made nigh, ver. 13, 17, they have the promise or the covenant of promise to them and to their children, according to Acts 2. 39, and so are partakers of that covenant of Abraham, that we are speaking of, Eph. 3. 6. The inchurched Gentiles are put into the same inheritance for substance (both as to invisible and visible benefits,

according to their respective conditions) are of the same body, and partakers of the same promise with the Jews, the children of Abraham, of old. The same may be gathered from Gen. 9. 27. Matt. 8. 11. and 21. 43. (4) Sundry scriptures which extend to gospel times do confirm the same interest to the seed of the faithful which is held forth in the covenant of Abraham, and consequently do confirm the continuance of that covenant, as Exod. 20. 6. There in the sanction of a moral and perpetual commandment, and that respecting ordinances, the portion of the church, God, declareth himself to be a God of mercy to them that love him, and to their seed after them in their generations, consonant to Gen. 17. 7: compare herewith, Psalm 105. 8, 9, and Deut. 7. 9. Deut. 30. 6. The grace signified by circumcision is there promised to parents and children, importing the covenant to both, which circumcision sealed, Gen. 17. and that is a gospel promise, as the apostle citing part of that context, as the voice of the gospel shews Rom. 10. 6, 8, with Deut. 20. 11, 14. And it reacheth to the Jews in the latter days, ver. 1, 5. Isaiah 65. 23, in the most glorious gospel state of the church, v. 17, 19. The blessing of the Lord is the promised portion of the offspring or children, as well as of the faithful parents; so Isa. 44. 3, 4. & 59. 20, 21. Ezek. 37. 25, 26. At the future calling of the Jews, which those texts have reference to, (Rom. 11. 26. Ezek. 37. 19, 22, 23, 24,) their children shall be under the promise or co-

venant of special grace to be conveyed to them in the ordinances, Isa. 59. 21, and be subjects of David, i. e. Christ their king, Ezek. 37. 25, and have a portion in his sanctuary, ver. 26. And this according to the tenor of the ancient covenant of Abraham, whereby God will be their God (viz. both of parents and children) and they shall be his people, ver. 26, 27. Now although more abundant fruits of the covenant may be seen in those times, and the Jews then may have more abundant grace given to the body of them, to continue in the covenant; yet the tenor and frame of the covenant itself is one and the same, both to the Jews and Gentiles under the new testament, Gal. 3. 28. Col. 3. 11. Heb. 8. 10. The house of Israel, i. e. the church of God, both among Jews and Gentiles under the new testament, have that covenant made with them, the sum whereof is, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Which is a renewing of that covenant of Abraham in Gen. 17. (as the same is very often over in those terms renewed in scripture, and is distinguished from the law, Gal. 3. 16, 17. Heb. 8. 9.) wherein is implied God's being a God to the seed, as well as parents, and taking both to be his people, though it be not expressed. Even as it is often plainly implied in that expression of the covenant in other places of the covenant, in many places of scripture, Deut. 29. 13. Jer. 31. 1. and 32. 38, 39, and 30. 20, 22. Ezek. 37. 25, 27. Also the

writing of the law in the heart, in Heb. 8. 10, is that heart-circumcision, which Deut. 30. 6. extends both to parents and seed. And the term house of Israel, doth according to scripture use, fitly express and take in (especially as to the external administration of the covenant) both parents and children, among both which are found that elect and saved number, that make up the invisible Israel. Compare Jer. 13. 11. and 9. 26. Isa. 5. 7. Hos. 1. 6. Ezek. 39. 25. Neither may we exclude the least in age from the good of that promise, Heb. 8. 11. (they being sometimes pointed to by that phrase, from the least to the greatest, Jer. 44. 12, with ver. 7.) no more than the least in other respects. Compare Isa. 54. 13. In Acts 2. 39, at the passing of those Jews into new testament church state, the Lord is so far from repealing the covenant interest, that was granted unto children in the former testament, or from making the children there losers by their parents' faith, that he doth expressly renew the old grant, and tells them, that the promise or covenant (for the promise and the covenant are terms that do mutually infer each other: compare Acts 3. 25. Gal. 3. 16, 17, 18, 29. Rom. 4. 16. Heb. 6. 17.) is to them and their children. The same is asserted to be the appointed portion of the far off Gentiles, when they should be called. By all which it appears that the covenant of Abraham, Gen. 17. 7. whereby God is the God of the faithful and their seed, continues under the gospel.

Now if the seed of the faithful be still in the covenant of Abraham, then they are members of the visible church. (1) Because that covenant of Abraham, Gen. 17. 7. was properly church-covenant or the covenant which God makes with his visible church, i. e. the covenant of grace considered in the external dispensation of it, and in the promises and privileges that belong to that dispensation. For many were taken into that covenant, that were never of the invisible church, and by that covenant the family of Abraham, as also by the renewing thereof, the house of Israel, afterwards were established the visible church of God, Gen. 17. and Deut. 29. 12, 13; and from that covenant men might be broken off, Gen. 17. 14. Rom. 11. 17, 19; and to that covenant circumcision, the badge of church membership, was annexed. Therefore the covenantees therein, were and are church members. (2) Because in that covenant the seed are spoken of in terms describing or inferring church-membership, as well as their parents: for they have God for their God, and are his people as well as their parents, Gen. 17. 7, 8. with Deut. 29. 11, 13. They have the covenant made with them, Deut. 29. 14. 15; and the covenant is said to be between God and them, (between me and thee, and between thy seed after thee: so the Hebrew runs) Gen. 17. 7. They are also in that covenant appointed to be the subjects of the initiatory seal of the covenant,

the seal of membership, Gen. 17. 9, 10, 11. Therefore the seed are according to that covenant, members of the visible church, as well as their parents.

Argum. 2. Such seed or children are federally holy, 1 Cor. 7. 14. The word holy, as applied to any sort of persons, is never in scripture used in a lower sense, than for federal or covenant holiness, (the covenant holiness of the visible church) but very often in that sense: Ezra 9. 2. Deut. 7. 6. and 14. 2, 21, and 26. 19, and 28. 9. Exod. 19. 6. Dan. 8. 24. and 12. 7. Rom. 11. 16. So that to say they are holy in this sense, viz. by covenant relation, and separation to God in his church, is as much as to say, they are in the covenant of the visible church, or members of it.

Argum. 3. From Mark 10. 14, 15, 16. Matt. 19. 14, children's membership in the visible church is either the next and immediate sense of those words of Christ, of such is the kingdom of heaven; and so the kingdom of heaven, or of God, is not rarely used in other scriptures to express the visible church, or church estate, Matt. 25. 1. and 21. 43. and 8. 11, 12; or it evidently follows from any other sense, that can rationally be given of the words. For those may not be denied a place or portion in the visible church, whom Christ affirms to have a portion in the kingdom either of invisible grace, or of eternal glory. Nor do any in ordinary course pass into the kingdom of glory

hereafter, but through the kingdom of grace in the visible church here. And also, that Christ, there graciously invites and calls little children to him, is greatly displeased with those that would hinder them, asserts them, notwithstanding their infancy, to be exemplary in their receiving the kingdom of God, embraceth them in his arms, and blesseth them. All which shews Christ's dear affection to, and owning of the children of the church, as a part of his kingdom; whom we, therefore, may not disown, lest we incur his displeasure, as the disciples did.

Argum. 4. Such seed or children are disciples, according to Matt. 28. 19. as appears. (1) Because subjects of Christ's kingdom are equivalent with disciples there, as the frame of that text shews, v. 18, 19, 20; but such children are subjects of Christ's kingdom, or of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 9. 14. In the discipling of all nations intended in Matt. 28. 19. the kingdom of God, which had been the portion of the Jews, was communicated to the Gentiles according to Matt. 21. 43. But in the kingdom of God these children have an interest or portion, Mark 10. 14. (2) The Apostles in accomplishing that commission, Matt. 28. 19, did disciple some children, viz. the children of disciplined parents, Acts 2. 39, and 15. 10. They are there called and accounted disciples, whom the false teachers would have brought under the yoke of circumcision after the manner of Moses v. 1. 5.

But many of those were children; Exod. 12. 48. Acts 21. 21. Lydia and her household; the Jailor and all his were discipled and baptized; Acts 16. 15, 31, 33. Paul at Corinth took in the children into the holy school of Christ, 1 Cor. 7. 14. (3) Such children belong unto Christ; for he calls them unto him, as his, to receive his blessing, Mark 10. 13, 16. They are to be received in his name, Mark 9. 37. Luke 9. 48. They have a part in the Lord, Josh. 22. 24, 25. therefore they are his disciples: for to belong to Christ, is to be a disciple of Christ, Mark 9. 41. with Matt. 10. 42. Now if they be disciples, then they are members of the visible church, as from the equivalency of those terms was before shewed.

Argum. 5. The whole current and harmony of Scripture shews, that ever since there was a visible church on earth, the children thereof have by the Lord's appointment been a part of it. So it was in the Old, and it is and shall be so in the New Testament. Eve, the mother of all living, hath a promise made, Gen. 3. 15. not only of Christ the head-seed, but through him also of church-seed, to proceed from her in a continued lineal succession, which should continually be at visible enmity with and stand at a distance, or be separated from the seed of the serpent. Under that promise made to Eve and her seed, the children of Adam are born, and are a part of the church in Adam's family. Even Cain was so, Gen. 4. 1, 3. till cast out of the presence of God therein,

v. 14. being now manifestly one of the seed of the serpent, 1 John 3. 12. and so becoming the father of a wicked unchurched race. But, then God appointed unto Eve another, viz. Seth, in whom to continue the line of her church-seed, Gen. 4. 25. How it did continue in his seed in their generations, Gen. 5. sheweth. Hence the children of the church are called, sons of God, (which is as much as members of the visible church) in contradistinction to the daughters of men, Gen. 6. 2. If righteous Noah be taken into the ark (then the only preserving place of the church) his children are taken in with him, Gen. 7. 1. though one of them, viz. Ham, after proved degenerate and wicked; but till he so appears, he is continued in the church with his brethren. So Gen. 9. 25, 26, 27, as the race of Ham or his son Canaan (parents and children) are cursed. So Shem (parent and children) is blessed, and continued in the place of blessing, the church, as Japhet also, or Japhet's posterity (still parent and children) shall in time be brought in. The holy line mentioned in Gen. 11. 10, 26, shews how the church continued in the seed of Shem, from him unto Abraham. When that race grew degenerate, Josh. 24. 2. then God called Abraham out of his country, and from his kindred, and established his covenant with him, which still took in parents and children, Gen. 17. 7, 9. So it did after in the house of Israel, Deut. 29. 11, 12, 13. And when any eminent restoration or establishment, is promised to

the church, the children thereof are still taken in as sharers in the same, Psalm 102. 16, 28. and 69. 35, 36. Jer. 32. 38, 39. Isa. 65. 18, 19, 23. Now when Christ comes to set up the Gospel administration of his church in the new testament, under the term of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 3. 2. and 11. 11. he is so far from taking away children's portion and membership therein, that himself asserts it, Matt. 19. 14. The children of the Gentiles, but now believing Corinthians are holy, 1 Cor. 7. 14. The Apostle writing to the church of Ephesus and Colosse, speaks to children as a part thereof, Eph. 6. 1. Col. 3. 20. The inchurched Romans and other Gentiles stand on the root of covenanting Abraham, and in the olive or visible church, they and their children, till broken off (as the Jews were) by positive unbelief, or rejection of Christ's truth or government, Rom. 11. 13, 16, 17, 22. The children of the Jews when they shall be called, shall be as aforetime in church-estate, Jer. 30. 20. with 31. 1. Ezek. 37. 25, 28. From all which it appears, that the series, or whole frame and current of scripture expressions, doth hold forth the continuance of children's membership in the visible church, from the beginning to the end of the world.

Partic. 4. The seed or children, who become members together with their parents (i. e. by means of their parents covenanting) are children in minority. This appears (1) Because such children as are holy by

their parents covenanting, would else be unclean, 1 Cor. 7. 14. But they would not else necessarily be unclean, if they were adult; for then they might act for themselves, and so be holy by their personal covenanting. Neither, on the other hand would they necessarily be holy, if adult, as he asserts the children there to be, for they might continue Pagans. Therefore the Apostle intends only infants, or children in minority. (2) It is a principle, that carries evidence of light and reason with it, as to all transactions civil and ecclesiastical, that if a man be of age, he should answer for himself, John 9. 21. They that are come to years of discretion, so as to have knowledge and understanding fit to act in a matter of that nature, are to covenant by their own personal act. Neh. 10. 28, 29. Isa. 44. 5. (3) They that are regularly taken in with their parents, are reputed to be visible entertainers of the covenant, and avouchers of God to be their God, Deut. 26. 7, 18. with Deut. 29. 11, 12. But if adult children should without regard to their own personal act, be taken in with their parents, then some might be reputed entertainers, that are manifest rejectors of the covenant; for so an adult son or daughter of a godly parent may be.

Partic. 5. It is requisite unto the membership of children, that the next parents, one or both, be in covenant. For although after generations have no small benefit by their pious ancestors, who derive federal

holiness to their succeeding generations, in case they keep their standing in the covenant, and be not apostates from it; yet the piety of ancestors sufficeth not, unless the next parent continue in covenant, Rom. 11. 22. (1) Because if the next parent be cut or broken off, the following seed are broken off also, Exod. 20. 5. Rom. 11. 17, 19, 20: as the Gentile believing parents and children were taken in; so the Jews, parents and children, were then broken off. (2) One of the parents must be a believer, or else the children are unclean, 1 Cor. 7. 14. (3) If children may be accounted members and baptized, though the next parents be not in covenant, then the church should be bound to baptize those, whom she can have no power over nor hope concerning, to see them brought up in the true christian religion, and under the ordinances: for the next parents being wicked, and not in covenant, may carry away and bring up their children to serve other Gods. (4) If we stop not at the next parent, but grant that ancestors may, notwithstanding the apostacy of the next parents, convey membership unto children, then we should want a ground where to stop; and then all the children on earth should have right to membership and baptism.

PROPOSITION III.

The infant-seed of confederate visible believers, are members of the same church with their parents, and when grown up are personally under the watch, discipline, and government of that church.

1. That they are members of the same church with their parents, appears, (1) Because, so were Isaac and Ishmael of Abraham's family-church, and the children of Jews, and proselytes of Israel's national church; and there is the same reason, for children now to be of the same congregational church with their parents. Christ's care for children and the scope of the covenant, as to obligation unto order and government, is as great now as then. (2) Either they are members of the same church with their parents, or of some other church, or non-members. But neither of the latter; therefore the former. That they are not non-members was before proved in Propos. II. Partic. 3. and if not members of the same church with their parents, then of no other. For if there be not reason sufficient to state them members of that church, where their parents have covenanted for them, and where ordinarily they are baptized and do inhabit, then much less is there reason to make them members of any other. And so they will be members of no particular church at all, and it was before shewed that there is no ordinary and orderly standing estate of

church members, but in some particular church:
(3) The same covenant-act is accounted the act of parent and child: but the parent's covenanting rendered himself a member of this particular church; therefore so it renders the child also. How can children come in, with and by their parents, and yet come into a church wherein and whereof their parents are not, so that as they should be of one church, and their parents of another. (4) Children are in an orderly and regular state: for they are in that state, wherein the order of God's covenant, and his institution therein hath placed them; they being members by virtue of the covenant of God. To say their standing is disorderly, would be to impute disorder to the order of God's covenant, or irregularity to the rule. Now all will grant it to be most orderly and regular, that every christian be a member in some particular church, (and in that particular church) where his regular habitation is, which to children usually is, where their parents are. If the rule call them to remove, then their membership ought orderly to be translated to the church, whither they remove. Again, order requires, that the child, and the power of government over the child, should go together. It would bring shame and confusion, for the child to be from under government, Prov. 29. 15. and parental and ecclesiastical government concurring, do mutually help and strengthen each other. Hence the parent and the child must be members of the same church, unless the child be by

some special providence so removed, as that some other person hath the power over him.

2. That when these children are grown up, they are personally under the watch, discipline and government of that church, is manifest; for (1) Children were under Patriarchal and Mosaical discipline of old, Gen. 18. 19. and 21. 9, 10, 12. Gal. 5. 3, and, therefore, under congregational discipline now. (2) They are within the church, or members thereof, (as hath been, and after will be further proved) and therefore subject to church judicature, 1 Cor. 5. 12. (3) They are disciples, and, therefore, under discipline in Christ's school, Matt. 28. 19, 20. (4) They are in church-covenant, and therefore, subject to church-power, Gen. 17. 7. with Chap. 18. 19. (5) They are subjects of the kingdom of Christ, and therefore, under the laws and government of his kingdom, Ezek. 37. 25, 26. (6) Baptism leaves the baptized (of which number these children are) in a state of subjection to the authoritative teaching of Christ's ministers, and to the observation of all his commandments, Mat. 28. 19, 20. and therefore in a state of subjection unto discipline. (7) Elders are charged to take heed unto and to feed, (that is, both to teach and rule, compare Ezek. 34. 3, 4.) all the flock or church, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers, Acts 20. 28. That children are a part of the flock, was before proved; and so Paul accounts

them, writing to the same flock or church of Ephesus, Eph. 6. 1. 8. Otherwise irreligion and apostacy would inevitably break into churches, and no church way left by Christ to prevent or heal the same; which would also bring many church members under that dreadful judgment of being let alone in their wickedness, Hos. 4. 16. 17.

PROPOSITION IV.

These adult persons are not therefore to be admitted to full communion, merely because they are and continue members, without such further qualifications as the word of God requireth thereunto.

The truth hereof is plain.

(1) From 1 Cor. 11. 28, 29, where it is required that such as come to the Lord's supper, be able to examine themselves and to discern the Lord's body; else they will eat and drink unworthily, and eat and drink damnation, or judgment to themselves, when they partake of this ordinance: but mere membership is separable from such ability to examine one's self, and discern the Lord's body; as in the children of the covenant that grow up to years is too often seen. (2) In the Old Testament, though men did continue members of the church, yet for ceremonial uncleanness they were to be kept from full communion in the holy things, Levit. 7. 20, 21. Num. 9. 6, 7. & 19. 13, 20. Yea and the priests and porters in the old testament, had special

charge committed to them, that men should not partake in all the holy things, unless duly qualified for the same, notwithstanding their membership, 2 Chr. 23. 19. Ezek, 22. 26, and 44. 7, 8, 9, 23. And therefore much more in these times, where moral fitness and spiritual qualifications are wanting. Membership alone, is not sufficient for full communion. More was required to adult persons eating the passover, than mere membership, therefore so there is now, to the Lord's supper. For they were to eat to the Lord, Ex. 12. 14, which is expounded in 2 Chron. 30. where keeping the passover to the Lord, ver. 5. imports and requires exercising repentance, ver. 6, 7. their actual giving up themselves to the Lord, ver. 8. heart preparation for it, ver. 19. and holy rejoicing before the Lord, ver. 21, 25. See the like in Ezra 6. 21, 22. (3) Though all members of the church are subjects of baptism, they and their children, yet all members may not partake of the Lord's supper, as is further manifest from the different nature of baptism, and the Lord's supper. Baptism firstly and properly seals covenant holiness; as circumcision did, Gen. 17. church-membership, Rom. 15. 8. Planting into Christ, Rom. 6. and so members as such, are the subjects of baptism, Matt. 28. 19. But the Lord's supper is the sacrament of growth in Christ and of special communion with him, 1 Cor. 10. 16. which supposeth a special renewing and exercise of

faith and repentance, in those that partake of that ordinance. Now if persons even when adult, may be and continue members and yet be debarred from the Lord's supper, until meet qualification for the same do appear in them; then may they also (until like qualifications) be debarred from that power of voting in the church, which pertains to males in full communion. It seems not rational that those, who are not themselves fit for all ordinances, should have such an influence referring to all ordinances, as voting in election of officers, admission and censures of members doth import. For how can they that are not able to examine and judge themselves, be thought able and fit to discern and judge in the weighty affairs of the house of God. 1 Cor. 11. 28, 31. with 1 Cor. 5. 12.

PROPOSITION V.

Church-members who were admitted in minority, understanding the doctrine of faith, and publicly professing their assent thereto, not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the covenant before the church, wherein they give up themselves and children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church; their children are to be baptized.

This is evident from the Arguments following.

Argum. i. These children are partakers of that which is the main ground of baptizing any children whatsoever, and neither the parents nor the children do put in any bar to hinder it.

1. That they partake of that, which is the main ground of baptizing any, is clear; because interest in the covenant is the main ground of title to baptism, and this these children have. (1) Interest in the covenant is the main ground of title to baptism; for so in the Old Testament, this was the ground of title to circumcision, Gen. 17. 7, 9, 10, 11. to which baptism now answers, Col. 2. 11, 12. and Acts 2. 38, 39; they are on this ground exhorted to be baptized because the promise or covenant was to them, and to their children. That a member, or one in covenant, as such, is the subject of baptism, was further cleared before, Propos. 1. (2) That these children have interest in the covenant appears; because if the parent be in covenant, the child is also: for the covenant is to parents and their seed in their generations. Gen, 17. 7, 9; the promise is to you, and to your children, Acts 2. 39. If the parent stands in the church, so doth the child among the Gentiles now, as well as among the Jews of old, Rom. 11. 16, 20, 21, 22. It is unheard of in scripture, that the progress of the covenant stops at the infant-child. But *the parents in question are in covenant*, as appears. (1) Because they were once in covenant, and never since discovenanted. If they had not once been in covenant, they had not warrantably been baptized; and they are so still, except in some way of God they have been discovenanted, cast out, or cut off from their covenant relation, which these have not been: neither are persons once in cov-

enant, broken off from it, according to scripture, save for notorious sin, and incorrigibleness therein, Rom. 11. 20. which is not the case of these parents. (2) Because the tenor of the covenant is to the faithful and their seed after them, in their generations, Gen. 17. 7. even to a thousand generations, i. e. conditionally, provided that the parents successively do continue to be keepers of the covenant, Exod. 20. 6. Deut. 7. 9, 11. Psa. 105. 8. which the parents in question are, because they are not (in scripture account in this case) forsakers or rejecters of the God and covenant of their fathers. See Deut. 29. 25, 26. 2 Kings 17. 15, 20. 2 Chron. 7. 22. Deut. 7. 10.

2. That these parents, in question, do not put any bar to hinder their children from baptism, is plain from the words of the proposition, wherein they are described to be such as understand the doctrine of faith, and publicly profess their assent thereto: therefore, they put not in any bar of gross ignorance, atheism, heresy, or infidelity: also they are not scandalous in life but solemnly own the covenant, before the church, therefore they put not in any bar of profaneness, or wickedness, or apostacy from the covenant wherinto they entered in minority. That the infant children, in question do themselves put any bar, none will imagine.

Argum. ii. The children of the parents in question, are either children of the covenant, or strangers from the covenant, Eph. 2. 12. either holy or unclean, 1 Cor.

7. 14. either within the church or without, 1 Cor. 5. 12. either such as have God for their God, or without God in the world, Eph. 2. 12. But he that considers the Proposition, will not affirm the latter concerning these children: and the former being granted, infers their right to baptism.

Argum. iii. To deny the proposition would be, (1) To straiten the grace of Christ in the gospel dispensation, and to make the church in New Testament times in a worse case, relating to their children successively, than were the Jews of old. (2) To render the children of the Jews, when they shall be called, in a worse condition, than under the legal administration; contrary to Jer. 30. 20. Ezek. 37. 25, 26. (3) To deny the application of the initiatory seal to such as regularly stand in the church and covenant, to whom the Mosaical dispensation, nay, the first institution in the covenant of Abraham, appointed to be applied, Gen. 17. 9, 10. John 7. 22, 23. (4) To break God's covenant by denying the initiatory seal to those that are in covenant, Gen. 17. 9, 10, 14.

Argum. iv. Confederate visible believers, though but in the lowest degree such, are to have their children baptized; witness the practice of John Baptist and the Apostles, who baptized persons upon the first beginning of their christianity. But the parents in question are confederate visible believers, at least in some degree. For, (1) Charity may observe in them sundry positive arguments for it; witness the terms of the

proposition and nothing evident against it. (2) Children of the godly qualified but as the persons in the proposition are said to be faithful, Tit. 1. 6. (3) Children of the covenant (as the parents in question are) have frequently the beginning of grace wrought in them in younger years, as Scripture and experience shews. Instance Joseph, Samuel, David, Solomon, Abijah, Josiah, Daniel, John Baptist, and Timothy; hence this sort of persons showing nothing to the contrary, are in charity, or to ecclesiastical reputation, visible believers. (4) They that are regularly in the church as the parents in question be, are visible saints in the account of Scripture, (which is the account of truth) for the church is, in scripture account, a company of saints, 1 Cor. 14. 33. & 1. 2. (5) Being in covenant and baptized, they have faith and repentance indefinitely given to them in the promise, and sealed up in baptism, Deut. 30. 6. which continues valid and so a valid testimony for them while they do not reject it. Yet it does not necessarily follow, that these persons are immediately fit for the Lord's supper, because though they are in a latitude of expression, to be accounted visible believers, or in *numero fidelium*, as even infants in covenant are, yet they may want that ability to examine themselves, and that special exercise of faith, which is requisite to that ordinance; as was said upon Propos. 4.

Argum. v. The denial of baptism to the children in question, hath a dangerous tendency to irreligion and

apostacy; because it denies them, and so the children of the church successively, to have any part in the Lord; which is the way to make them cease from fearing the Lord, Josh. 22. 24, 25, 27. For if they have a part in the Lord, i. e. a portion in Israel, and so in the Lord the God of Israel, then they are in the church, or members of it, and so to be baptized, according to Prop. 1. The owning of the children of those that successively continue in covenant to be a part of the church, is so far from being destructive to the purity and prosperity of the church and of religion therein (as some conceive) that this imputation belongs to the contrary tenet. To seek to be more pure than the rule, will ever end in impurity in the issue. God hath so framed his covenant, and consequently the constitution of his church thereby, as to design a continuation and propagation of his kingdom therein from one generation to another. Hence the covenant runs, To us and to our seed after us in their generations. To keep in the line and under the influence and efficacy of this covenant of God is the true way to the church's glory. To cut it off and disavow it, cuts off the posterity of Zion, and hinders it from being (as in the most glorious times it shall be) an eternal excellency and the joy of many generations. This progress of the covenant establisheth the church Deut. 29. 13. Jer. 30. 20: the contrary therefore, doth disestablish it. This obligeth and advantageth to the conveyance of religion down to after generations; the care whereof is strictly commanded, and highly approved

by the Lord, Psalm 78. 4, 5, 6, 7. Gen. 18. 19. This continues a nursery still in Christ's orchard or vineyard, Isa. 5. 1, 7. The contrary neglects that, and so lets the whole run to ruin. Surely God was an holy God, and loved the purity and glory of the church in the Old Testament; but then he went in this way of a successive progress of the covenant to that end, Jer. 13. 11. If some did then, or do now, decline to unbelief and apostacy, that doth not make the faith of God in his covenant of none effect, or the advantage of interest therein inconsiderable; yea the more holy, reforming and glorious that the times are, or shall be, the more eminently is a successive continuation and propagation of the church therein designed, promised, and intended, Isa. 60. 15. & 59. 21. Ezek. 37. 25, 28. Psalm 102. 16, 28. Jer. 32. 39.

Argum. vi. The parents, in question, are personal, immediate, and yet continuing members of the church.

1. That they are personal members, or members in their own persons, appears, (1) Because they are personally holy, 1 Cor. 7. 14. not parents only, but your children are holy. (2) They are personally baptized, or have had baptism, the seal of membership applied to their own persons; which being regularly done, is a divine testimony, that they are in their own persons members of the church. (3) They are personally under discipline, and liable to church

censures in their own persons; *vide* Prop. 3. (4) They are personally (by means of the covenant) in a visible state of salvation. To say they are not members in their own persons, but in their own parents, would be as if one should say, they are saved in their parents, and not in their persons. (5) When they commit iniquity, they personally break the covenant, therefore are personally in it, Jer. 11. 2, 10. Ezek. 16.

2. By the like reasons, it appears that children are immediate members, as to the essence of membership (i. e. that they themselves in their own persons, are the immediate subjects of this adjunct of church-membership) though they come to it by means of their parents covenanting. For as touching that distinction of mediate and immediate, as applied to membership (which some urge) we are to distinguish;

- (1) Between the efficient and essence of membership.
- (2) Between the instrumental efficient or means thereof, which is their parents' profession and covenanting; and the principal efficient, which is divine institution. They may be said to be mediate (or rather mediately) members, as they become members by means of their parents covenanting, as an instrumental cause thereof: but that doth nothing vary or diminish the essence of their membership. For divine institution giveth or granteth a real and personal membership unto them, as well as unto their parents, and maketh the parent a public person, and so his act theirs to that end.

Hence the essence of membership, that is, covenant-interest, or a place and portion within the visible church is really, properly, personally and immediately the portion of the child. By divine gift and grant, (Josh. 22. 25, 27.) their children have a part in the Lord as well as themselves. A part in the Lord there, and Church-membership (or membership in Israel) are terms equivalent. Now the children there, and a part in the Lord are subject and adjunct, which nothing comes between, so as to sever the adjunct from the subject; therefore they are immediate subjects of that adjunct of immediate members. Again, their visible ingrafting into Christ the head, and so into the church his body, is sealed in their baptism: but in ingrafting, nothing comes between the graft and the stock. Their union is immediate; hence they are immediately inserted into the visible church, or immediate members thereof. The little children in Deut. 29. 11. were personally and immediately a part of the people of God, or members of the church of Israel, as well as their parents. To be in covenant, or to be a covenantee is the *formalis ratio* of a church member. If one come to be in covenant one way, and another in another, but both are in covenant or covenantees (i. e.) parties with whom the covenant is made, and whom God takes into covenant) as children here are, Gen. 17, 7, 8: then both are in their own persons the immediate subjects of the *formalis ratio* of membership, and so immediate

Members. The act in covenanting is but the instrumental means of membership, and yet children are not without this neither. For the act of the parent (their public person) is accounted theirs, and they are said to enter into covenant, Deut. 29. 11, 12. So that what is it that children want unto an actual, complete, proper, absolute, and immediate membership? (so far as these terms may with any propriety or pertinency be applied to the matter in hand) is it covenant-interest which is the *formalis ratio* of membership? No, they are in covenant. Is it divine grant and institution, which is the principal efficient? No, he hath clearly declared himself, that he grants unto the children of his people a portion in his church, and appoints them to be members thereof. Is it an act of covenanting, which is the instrumental means? No, they have this also reputatively by divine appointment, making the parent a public person, and accounting them to covenant in his covenanting. A different manner and means of conveying the covenant to us, or of making us members, doth not make a different sort of the membership. We now are as truly, personally, and immediate members of the body of fallen mankind, and by nature heirs of the condemnation pertaining thereto as Adam was, though he came to be so by his own personal act, and we by the act of our public person. If a prince give such lands to a man and his heirs successively, while they con-

tinue loyal; the following heir is a true and immediate owner of that land, and may be personally disinherited if disloyal, as well as his father before him. A member is one that is according to rule, (or according to divine institution) within the visible church. Thus the child is, properly and personally, or immediately. Paul casts all men into two sorts, those within, and those without, i. e. members and non-members, 1 Cor. 5. 12. It seems he knew of no such distinction of mediate and immediate as puts a medium between these two.

Object. If children be complete and immediate members as their parents are, then they shall immediately have all church privileges, as their parents have, without any further act or qualification.

Ans. It follows not. All privileges that belong to members, as such, do belong to the children as well as the parents. But all church privileges do not so belong. A member as such (or all members) may not partake of all privileges; but they are to make progress both in memberly duties and privileges, as their age, capacity, and qualifications do fit them for the same.

3. That their membership still continues in adult age, and ceaseth not with their infancy, appears; (1) Because in scripture persons are broken off only for notorious sin, or incorrigible impenitency and unbelief, not for growing up to adult age, Rom. 11. 20. (2) The Jewish children circumcised, did not cease

to be members by growing up, but continued in the church and were by virtue of their membership, received in infancy, bound unto various duties, and in special unto those solemn personal professions that pertained to adult members; not, as then, entering into a new membership, but as making a progress in memberly duties, Deut. 26. 2, 10, and 16. 16, 17, with Gal. 5. 5. (3) Those relations of born servants and subjects, which the scripture makes use of to set forth the state of children in the church by Lev. 25. 41, 42. Ezek. 37. 25, do not (as all men know) cease with infancy, but continue in adult age. Whence also it follows, that one special end of membership received in infancy, is to leave persons under engagement to service and subjection to Christ in his church, when grown up, when they are fittest for it, and have most need of it. (4) There is no ordinary way of cessation of membership, but by death, dismissal, excommunication, or dissolution of the society. None of which is the case of the persons in question. (5) Either they are, when adult, members or non-members. If non-members, then a person admitted a member, and sealed by baptism, not cast out, nor deserving so to be, may (the church whereof he was a member still remaining) become a non-member and out of the church, and of the unclean world; which the scripture acknowledgeth not. Now if the parent stand member of the church, the child is a member also. For now the root is holy; therefore so

are the branches, Rom. 11. 16. 1 Cor. 7. 14. The parent is in covenant; therefore so is the child, Gen. 17. 7. and if the child be a member of the visible church, then he is a subject of baptism, according to Propos. I.

PROPOSITION VI.

Such church-members, who either by death, or some other extraordinary providence, have been inevitably hindered from public acting as aforesaid, yet have given the church cause, in judgment of charity, to look at them as so qualified, and such as had they been called thereunto, would have so acted; their children are to be baptized.

This is manifest.

- (1) Because the main foundation of the right of the child to privilege remains, viz. God's institution, and the force of his covenant carrying it to the generations of such as continue keepers of the covenant, i. e. not visibly breakers of it. By virtue of which institution and covenant, the children in question are members, and their membership being distinct from the parents' membership, ceaseth not, but continues, notwithstanding the parents' decease, or necessary absence; and if members, then subjects of baptism.
- (2) Because the parents' not doing what is required in the fifth proposition, is through want of opportunity; which is not to be imputed as their guilt, so as to be a bar to the child's privilege.
- (3) God reckon-

eth that as done in his service, to which there was a manifest desire and endeavour, albeit the acting of it were hindered; as in David to build the temple, 1 Kings 8. 18, 19. In Abraham to sacrifice his son, Heb. 11. 17. according to that in 2 Cor. 8. 12. Where there is a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not: which is true of this church duty, as well as of that of alms. It is an usual phrase with the ancients to style such and such martyrs *in voto*, and baptized *in voto*, because there was no want of desire that way, though their desire was not actually accomplished. (4) The terms of the proposition import that in charity, that is here done interpretatively, which is mentioned to be done in Prop. V. expressly.

PROPOSITION VII.

The Members of orthodox churches, being sound in the faith, and not scandalous in life, and presenting due testimony thereof; these occasionally coming from one church to another, may have their children baptized in the church whither they come by virtue of communion of churches: but if they remove their habitation, they ought orderly to covenant and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church, where they settle their abode, and where their children are to be baptized. It being the church's duty to receive such into communion, so far, as they are regularly fit for the same.

I. Such members of other churches, as are here described, occasionally coming from one church to another, their children are to be baptized in the church whither they come by virtue of communion of churches.

1. Because he that is regularly a member of a true particular church, is a subject of baptism according to Propositions first and second. But the children of the parents here described are such, according to Propositions fifth and sixth. Therefore, they are meet and lawful subjects of baptism, or have a right to be baptized. And communion of churches, infers such acts as this is, viz. to baptize a fit subject of baptism, though a member of another church, when the same is orderly desired. (see Platform of Discipline, Chap. XV. Partic. 4.) For *like as* every church, hath a double consideration, viz. (1) Of its own constitution and communion within itself: (2) Of that communion which it holds, and ought to maintain with other churches: so the Officer, (the Pastor or Teacher) thereof, is therein set. (1) To administer to this church constantly; (2) To do acts of communion occasionally, viz. such as belong to his office, as baptizing doth, respecting the members of other churches, with whom this church holds, or ought to hold communion.

2. To refuse communion with a true church in lawful and pious actions, is unlawful, and justly accounted schismatical. For, if the church be true, Christ holdeth some communion with it; and therefore so

must we. But if we will not have communion with it in those acts that are good and pious, then in none at all. Total separation from a true church is unlawful. But to deny a communion in good actions, is to make a total separation. Now to baptize a fit subject, as is the child in question, is a lawful and a pious action, and therefore by virtue of communion of churches, in the case mentioned, to be attended to.

And if baptism lawfully administered, may and ought to be received by us, for our children, in another true church, where Providence so casts us, as that we cannot have it in our own, (as doubtless it may and ought to be) then also we may and ought in like case to dispense baptism, when desired to a meet and lawful subject, being a member of another church. To deny or refuse either of these, would be an unjustifiable refusing of communion of churches, and tending to sinful separation.

II. Such as remove their habitation, ought orderly to covenant and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church, where they settle their abode, and so their children to be baptized. (1) Because the regularly baptized are disciples, and under the discipline and government of Christ: but they that are absolutely removed from the church, whereof they were, so as to be incapable of being under discipline there, shall be under it no where, if not in the church where they inhabit. They that would have church privileges ought to be under church

power : but these will be under no church power, but as lambs in a large place, if not under it there, where their settled abode is. (2) Every christian ought to covenant for himself and for his children, or professedly to give up himself, and his to the Lord, and that in the way of his ordinances, Deut. 26. 17. and 12. 5. And explicit covenanting is a duty, especially where we are called to it, and have opportunity for it: nor can they be said to covenant implicitly, that do explicitly refuse a professed covenanting, when called thereunto. And especially this covenanting is a duty, when we would partake of such church privilege as baptism for our children is. But the parents, in question, will now be professed covenanters no where, if not in the church, where their fixed habitation is. Therefore they ought orderly to covenant there, and so their children to be baptized. (3) To refuse covenanting, and subjection to Christ's government in the church where they live, being so removed as to be utterly incapable of it elsewhere, would be a walking disorderly, and would too much savour of profaneness and separation; and hence to administer baptism to the children of such as stand in that way, would be to administer Christ's ordinances, to such as are in a way of sin and disorder; which ought not to be, 2 Thes. 3. 6. 1 Chron. 15. 13, and would be contrary to that rule. 1 Cor. 14. 40. Let all things be done decently and in order.

QUESTION II.

Whether according to the word of God, there ought to be a Consociation of churches, and what should be the manner of it?

ANSWER.

The answer may be briefly given in the propositions following.

I. Every church or particular congregation of visible saints in gospel order, being furnished with a presbytery, at least with a teaching elder, and walking together in truth and peace, hath received from the Lord Jesus, full power and authority ecclesiastical within itself, regularly to administer all the ordinances of Christ, and is not under any other ecclesiastical jurisdiction whatsoever. For to such a church Christ hath given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that what they bind or loose on earth, shall be bound or loosed in heaven, Matt. 16. 19. & 18. 17, 18. Elders are ordained in every church, Acts 14. 23. Tit. 1. 5. and are therein authorized officially to administer in the word, prayer, sacraments, and censures, Mat. 28. 19, 20. Acts 6. 4. 1 Cor. 4. 1. and 5. 4. 12. Acts 20, 28. 1 Tim 5. 17. and 3. 5. The reproofing of the church of Corinth, and of the Asian churches severally, imports they had power each of them within itself, to reform the abuses that

were amongst them, 1 Cor. 5. Rev. 2. 14, 20. Hence it follows, that consociation of churches is not to hinder the exercise of this power; but by counsel from the word of God to direct and strengthen the same upon all just occasions.

II. The churches of Christ do stand in a sisterly relation to each other, Cant. 8. 8. being united in the same faith and order, Eph. 4. 5. Col. 2. 5. To walk by the same rule, Phil. 3. 16. In the exercise of the same ordinances for the same end, Eph. 4. 11. 12, 13. 1 Cor. 16. 1. Under one and the same political head, the Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 1. 22, 23, & 4. 5. Rev. 2. 1. which union infers a communion suitable thereunto.

III. ‘ Communion of churches, is the faithful improvement of the gifts of Christ bestowed upon them, for his service and glory, and their mutual good and edification, according to capacity and opportunity, 1 Pet. 4, 10, 11, 1 Cor. 12. 4, 7. & 10. 24. 1 Cor. 3. 21, 22. Cant. 8. 9. Rom. 1. 15. Gal. 6. 10.

IV. ‘ Acts of communion of churches are such as these.

1. ‘ Hearty care and prayer one for another, 2 Cor. 11. 28. Cant. 8. 8. Rom. 1. 9. Col. 1. 9. Eph. 6. 18.

2. ‘ To afford relief by communication of their gifts in temporal or spiritual necessities, Rom. 15. 26, 27. Acts 11. 22, 29. 2 Cor. 8. 1. 4, 14.

3. ‘ To maintain unity and peace, by giving account one to another, of their public actions, when it is orderly desired, Acts 11. 2, 3, 4 — 18. Josh. 22. 13, 21, 30. 1 Cor. 10. 32. and to strengthen one another in their regular administrations; as in special, by a concurrent testimony against persons justly censured, Acts 5. 41. and 16. 4, 5. 2 Tim. 4. 15. 2 Thes. 3. 14.

4. ‘ To seek and accept help from, and give help unto each other.

(1) ‘ In case of divisions and contentions, whereby the peace of any church is disturbed, Acts 15. 2.

(2) ‘ In matters of more than ordinary importance, [Prov. 24. 6, and 15. 22] as ordination, translation, and deposition of Elders and such like, 1 Tim. 5. 22.

(3) ‘ In doubtful and difficult questions and controversies, doctrinal or practical, that may arise, Acts 15. 2, 6.

(4) ‘ For the rectifying of mal-administrations, and healing of errors and scandals, that are unhealed among themselves, 3 John 9, 10. 2 Cor. 2. 6, 11. 1 Cor. 15. Rev. 2. 14, 15, 16. 2 Cor. 12. 20, 21. and 13. 2. Churches now have need of help in like cases, as well as churches then; Christ’s care is still for whole churches, as well as

‘ for particular persons; and Apostles being now
‘ ceased, there remains the duty of brotherly love,
‘ and mutual care, and helpfulness incumbent upon
‘ churches, especially Elders, for that end.

(5) ‘ In love and faithfulness to take notice of the
‘ troubles and difficulties, errors and scandals of
‘ another church, and to administer help, (when the
‘ case necessarily calls for it) though they should so
‘ neglect their own good and duty, as not to seek it,
‘ Exod. 23. 4. 5. Prov. 24. 11. 12.

(6) ‘ To admonish one another, when there is need
‘ and cause for it, and after due means with patience
‘ used, to withdraw from a church, or peccant party
‘ therein, obstinately persisting in error or scandal;
‘ (as in the Platform of Discipline, Chap. 15. Sect.
‘ 2. Partic. 3. is more at large declared,) Gal. 2. 11,
‘ 14. 2 Thess. 3. 6. Rom. 16. 17.

V. ‘ Consociation of churches is their mutual and
‘ solemn agreement to exercise communion in such
‘ acts as aforesaid, amongst themselves, with special
‘ reference to those churches which by providence
‘ are planted in a convenient vicinity, though with
‘ liberty reserved without offence to make use of
‘ others, as the nature of the case, or the advantage
‘ of opportunity may lead thereunto.

VI. ‘ The churches of Christ in this country hav-
‘ ing so good opportunity for it, it is meet to be
‘ commended to them, as their duty thus to consociate.

For (1) Communion of churches being commanded, and consociation being but an agreement to practise it, this must needs be a duty also. Psa. 119. 106. Neh. 28. 29. (2) Paul an Apostle sought with much labour the conference, concurrence, and right hand of fellowship of other apostles: and ordinary Elders and churches have not less need of each other, to prevent their running in vain, Gal. 2. 2, 6, 9. (3) Those general scripture rules, touching the need and use of counsel and help in weighty cases, concern all societies and polities, ecclesiastical as well as civil. Prov. 11. 14. & 15. 22. & 20. 18. & 24. 6. Eccles. 4. 9, 10, 14. (4) The pattern in Acts 15. holds forth a warrant for councils, which may be greater or lesser, as the matter shall require. (5) Concurrence and communion of churches in gospel times, is not obscurely held forth in Isa. 19. 23, 24, 25. Zeph. 3. 9. 1 Cor. 11. 26. and 14. 32, 36. (6) There has constantly been in these churches a possession of communion, in giving the right hand of fellowship in the gathering of churches, and ordination of Elders; which importeth a consociation, and obligeth to the practice thereof. Without which we should also want an expedient, and sufficient cure for emergent church difficulties and differences: with the want whereof, our way is charged, but unjustly, if this part of the doctrine thereof were duly practised.

VII. ' The manner of the church's agreement

L2

‘ herein, or entering into this consociation, may be by
‘ each church’s open consenting unto the things here
‘ declared, in answer to the second question, as also
‘ to what is said thereabout in Chap. 15, and 16 of
‘ the Platform of Discipline, with reference to other
‘ churches in this colony and country, as in Prop. 5.
‘ is before expressed.

VIII ‘ The manner of exercising and practising
‘ that communion, which this consent or agreement
‘ specially tendeth unto, may be, by making use oc-
‘ casionally of Elders or able brethren of other church-
‘ es ; or by the more solemn meetings of both Elders
‘ and Messengers in lesser or greater councils, as the
‘ matter shall require.

HEADS OF AGREEMENT,

ASSENTED TO BY THE

UNITED MINISTERS,

FORMERLY CALLED

Presbyterian and Congregational.

I. Of Churches and Church-members.

1. We acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ to have one catholic church, or kingdom, comprehending all that are united to him, whether in heaven or earth. And do conceive the whole multitude of visible believers, and their infant seed (commonly called the catholic visible church) to belong to Christ's spiritual kingdom in this world. But for the notion of a catholic visible church here, as it signifies its having been collected into any formed society, under a visible human head on earth, whether one person singly, or many collectively, we, with the rest of protestants, unanimously disclaim it.

2. We agree, that particular societies of visible saints, who, under Christ their head, are statedly joined together, for ordinary communion with one

another in all the ordinances of Christ, are particular churches, and are to be owned by each other, as instituted churches of Christ, though differing in apprehensions and practice in some lesser things.

3. That none shall be admitted as members, in order to communion in all the special ordinances of the gospel, but such persons as are knowing, and sound in the fundamental doctrines of the christian religion, without scandal in their lives; and to a judgment regulated by the word of God, are persons of visible holiness and honesty; credibly professing cordial subjection to Jesus Christ.

4. A competent number of such visible saints (as before described) do become the capable subjects of stated communion, in all the special ordinances of Christ, upon their mutual declared consent and agreement to walk together therein, according to gospel rule. In which declaration, different degrees of explicitness, shall no ways hinder such churches from owning each other, as instituted churches.

5. Though parochial bounds be not of divine right, yet for common edification, the members of a particular church ought (as much as conveniently may be) to live near one another.

6. That each particular church hath right to use their own officers; and being furnished with such as are duly qualified and ordained, according to the gospel rule, hath authority from Christ for exercising

government, and of enjoying all the ordinances of worship within itself.

7. In the administration of church power, it belongs to the Pastors and other Elders of every particular church (if such there be) to rule and govern, and to the brotherhood, to consent according to the rule of the gospel.

8. That all professors as before described, are bound in duty, as they have opportunity, to join themselves as fixed members of some particular church; their thus joining being part of their professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, and an instituted mean of their establishment and edification; whereby they are under the pastoral care; and in case of scandalous or offensive walking, may be authoritatively admonished or censured, for their recovery, and for vindication of the truth, and the church professing it.

9. That a visible professor thus joined to a particular church, ought to continue stedfast with the said church; and not forsake the ministry, and ordinances there dispensed, without an orderly seeking a recommendation unto another church, which ought to be given, when the case of a person apparently requires it.

II. *Of the Ministry.*

1. We agree that the ministerial office is instituted by Jesus Christ for the gathering, guiding, edifying,

and governing of his church; and to continue to the end of the world.

2. They who are called to this office ought to be endued with competent learning and ministerial gifts, as also with the grace of God, sound in judgment, not novices in the faith and knowledge of the gospel; without scandal, of holy conversation, and such as devote themselves to the work and service thereof.

3. That ordinarily none shall be ordained to the work of this ministry, but such as are called and chosen thereunto by a particular church.

4. That in so great and weighty a matter as the calling and choosing a Pastor, we judge it ordinarily requisite, that every such church consult and advise with the Pastors of neighbouring congregations.

5. That after such advice, the person consulted about, being chosen by the brotherhood of that particular church over which he is to be set, and he accepting, be duly ordained and set apart to his office over them; wherein it is ordinarily requisite that the Pastors of neighbouring congregations concur with the preaching Elder or Elders, if such there be.

6. That whereas such ordination is only intended for such as never before had been ordained to the ministerial office; if any judge, that in the case also of the removal of one formerly ordained to a new station, or pastoral charge, there ought to be a like solemn recommending him and his labours to the grace

and blessing of God; no different sentiments or practice herein, shall be any occasion of contention, or breach of communion among us.

7. It is expedient, that they who enter on the work of preaching the gospel, be not only qualified for communion of saints, but also that, except in cases extraordinary, they give proof of their gifts and fitness for the said work, unto the Pastors of churches, of known abilities to discern and judge of their qualifications; that they may be sent forth with solemn approbation and prayer; which we judge needful, that no doubt may remain concerning their being called unto the work; and for preventing (as much as in us lieth) ignorant and rash intruders.

III. *Of Censures.*

1. As it cannot be avoided, but that in the purest churches on earth, there will sometimes offences and scandals arise, by reason of hypocrisy and prevailing corruption; so Christ hath made it the duty of every church to reform itself by spiritual remedies appointed by him, to be applied in all such cases, viz. admonition and excommunication.

2. Admonition, being the rebuking of an offending member, in order to conviction, is, in case of private offences, to be performed according to the rule in Matt. 18. 15, 16, 17. and in case of public offences openly before the church, as the honour of the gospel

and the nature of the scandal shall require. And, if either of the admonitions take place for the recovery of the fallen person, all further proceedings in a way of censure are thereon to cease, and satisfaction to be declared accordingly.

3. When all due means are used, according to the order of the gospel, for the restoring an offending and scandalous brother, and he notwithstanding, remains impenitent, the censure of excommunication is to be proceeded unto; wherein the Pastor and other Elders (if there be such) are to lead and go before the church; and the brotherhood to give their consent in a way of obedience unto Christ, and to the Elders, as over them in the Lord.

4. It may sometimes come to pass that a church-member, not otherwise scandalous, may sinfully withdraw, and divide himself from the communion of the church to which he belongeth; in which case, when all due means for the reducing him, prove ineffectual, he having thereby cut himself off from that church's communion, the church may justly esteem and declare itself discharged of any further inspection over him.

IV. *Of Communion of Churches.*

1. We agree that particular churches ought not to walk so distinct and separate from each other, as not to have care and tenderness towards one another. But their Pastors ought to have frequent meetings to-

gether, that by mutual advice, support, encouragement, and brotherly intercourse, they may strengthen the hearts and hands of each other, in the ways of the Lord.

2. That none of our particular churches shall be subordinate to one another, each being endued with equality of power from Jesus Christ. And that none of the said particular churches, their officer or officers, shall exercise any power, or have any superiority, over any other church, or their officers.

3. That known members of particular churches, constituted as aforesaid, may have occasional communion with one another, in the ordinances of the gospel, viz. the word, prayer, sacraments, singing of psalms, dispensed according to the mind of Christ; unless that church, with which they desire communion, hath any just exception against them.

4. That we ought not to admit any one to be a member of our respective congregations, that hath joined himself to another, without endeavours of mutual satisfaction of the congregations concerned.

5. That one church ought not to blame the proceedings of another, until it hath heard what that church is charged with, or its Elders or Messengers can say in vindication of themselves, from any charge of irregular or injurious proceedings.

6. That we are most willing and ready to give an account of our church proceedings to each other,

when desired ; for preventing or removing any offences, that may arise among us. Likewise we shall be ready to give the right hand of fellowship, and walk together according to the gospel rules of communion of churches.

V. Of Deacons and ruling Elders.

We agree that the office of a Deacon is of divine appointment, and that it belongs to their office to receive, lay out, and distribute the church's stock to its proper uses, by the direction of the Pastor, and brethren, if need be. And whereas divers are of opinion, that there is also the office of ruling Elders, who labour not in word and doctrine ; and others think otherwise ; we agree that this difference make no breach among us.

VI. Of occasional Meetings of Ministers, &c.

1. We agree that in order to concord, and in other weighty and difficult cases, it is needful and according to the mind of Christ, that the ministers of several churches be consulted and advised with, about such matters.

2. That such meetings may consist of smaller or greater numbers, as the matter shall require.

3. That particular churches, their respective Elders and members, ought to have a reverential regard to their judgment, so given, and not dissent therefrom without apparent grounds from the word of God.

VII. *Of our Demeanour towards the civil
Magistrate.*

1. We do reckon ourselves obliged continually to pray for God's protection, guidance, and blessing upon the Rulers set over us.

2. That we ought to yield unto them not only subjection in the Lord, but support, according to our station and abilities.

3. That if at any time, it shall be their pleasure to call together any number of us, to require an account of our affairs, and the state of our congregations, we shall most readily express all dutiful regard to them herein.

VIII. *Of a Confession of Faith.*

As to what appertains to soundness of judgment in matters of faith, we esteem it sufficient that a church acknowledge the scriptures to be the word of God, the perfect and only rule of faith and practice, and own either the doctrinal part of those, commonly called the articles of the church of England, or the confession or Catechisms, shorter or larger, compiled by the assembly at Westminster, or the confession agreed on at the Savoy, to be agreeable to the said rule.

IX. *Of our Duty and Deportment towards them
that are not in Communion with us.*

1. We judge it our duty to bear a christian res-

M

pect to all christians, according to their several ranks and stations, that are not of our persuasion or communion.

2. As for such as may be ignorant of the principles of the christian religion, or of vicious conversation, we shall in our respective places, as they give opportunity, endeavour to explain to them the doctrine of life and salvation, and to our utmost persuade them to be reconciled to God.

3. That such who appear to have the essential requisites to church-communion, we shall willingly receive them in the Lord, not troubling them with disputes about lesser matters.

As we assent to the fore-mentioned heads of agreement, so we unanimously resolve, as the Lord shall enable us, to practise according to them.

NOTES TO PLATFORM.



[A]

"The office of an Apostle, was to declare in an infallible manner, the whole gospel doctrine. Now, to qualify them for this high office, Christ gave them the inspiration, called The word of wisdom, 1 Cor. 12. 8.

"The office of the superior Christian Prophets, was to explain infallibly, the true meaning of the oracles contained in the writings of Moses and the Prophets. To qualify the Prophets for this office, Christ gave them the inspiration, called, The word of knowledge, 1 Cor. 12. 8.

"Their office" (Evangelists) "was to preach the gospel to the different Gentile nations. To fit them for this, Christ gave them the gift of tongues, whereby they were enabled to preach to every nation, in its own language; also the gift of miracles, for the confirmation of their doctrine; and the gift of faith, to enable them to encounter dangers."

Macknight's notes on Eph. 4. 11.

[B]

Pastors and Teachers, are also mentioned as distinct officers in the christian church, by the Authors of the Savoy Confession; first published in the year 1658; about eight years after the Platform appeared in America. See Savoy Confession, on the the Institution of Churches, Sect. 9. This distinction, however, is not founded on Scripture, and is therefore laid aside. The word DIDASKALOS, was not always used as descriptive of a distinct class of officers, even in the Apostolic times: Paul styles himself, in two instances, A preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher, 1 Tim. 11. 7. 2 Tim. 1. 11.

The first passage adduced by the Authors of the Platform in support of this distinction is, Eph. 4. 11. "And he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers." In this place it is evident, that the Apostle does not distinguish between Pastors and Teachers, as he does between Apostles, Prophets, &c. For it is not and some Teachers, which it should have been, in order to prove such a distinction.

The other passage which they adduce is, Rom. 12. 7, which must be read in connection with the verse preceding, and also with that following. And if we do this, it will prove that there ought to be more officers than the Authors of the Platform contend for. See the original of both places.

[C]

In endeavouring to ascertain how far scriptural authority sanctions a class of officers in the christian church, called 'Ruling Elders,'[†] it seems necessary to notice the meaning of the term Elder among the Jews; especially as the first christian church was at Jerusalem, and furnishes the earliest occurrence of the term, as a name of distinction among Christians. Acts 11. 30.

In the times of the Jewish polity, PRESBUTEROS (by which the LXX have commonly translated the Heb. ZAKEN) was a common term. Its primary meaning is older, or elder in years: and by a very natural and customary association, it is also used as expressive of wisdom, dignity, and authority; the honours of venerated age. But the term does not appear to have been employed among the Jews, as the appropriate name of any particular office. By the Elders of Israel, so frequently mentioned in the old testament, we understand the heads of families; or men, to whom age,

[†] "At the present time, (1823) there is not a single officer of this description, in any Congregational church in this country. This I think unhappy."

Dwight's Travels in New-England, &c. Vol. 4. p. 419.

experience, wisdom, and approved piety gave influence, and who became on every important occasion, the organs of communication, or directors of the people. Among other places, see Gen. 24. 2. Numb. 11. 16—30. Deut. 32. 25. Joshua 8. 10. 1 Sam. 4. 3. 2 Kings 6. 32. 2 Chron. 32. 3. Lam. 5. 12. Ezek. 7. 26. and consult Stock under ZAKEN.

So, the members of the Jewish sanhedrim, or national senate, sustaining various offices in that assembly, are in general denominated Elders (PRESBUTEROI) Matt. 26. 3, 47, 57, 59. Mark 8. 31. Luke 9. 22. John 8. 9. Acts 4. 5, 8, 23. Consult Schleusner and Parkhurst under the word.

There is an obvious analogy, between this ancient and customary use of the term, and its employment in apostolic times.

Elders, in the primitive ages of christianity, was the honourable distinction of the first converts to the gospel; as we learn from Acts 11. 30, already noticed. And from the transitions from the elder to the younger, and that of both sexes, 1 Tim. 5. 1, 2. 1 Peter 5. 1—5, it is obvious, that the term was not peculiar to office. These Elders, are elsewhere called the “first fruits”, James 1. 18, and those who “from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word,” Luke 1. 2. See also, 2 Pet. 1. 16. Heb. 2. 3. Acts 1. 21, 22.

Both the early converts, who had been witnesses of the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, I Cor. 15. 6—8, and those who first attached themselves to the ministry of the Apostles, Rom. 16. 5. 1 Cor. 16. 15, 19, were evidently regarded with great veneration. Peter and John call themselves Elders, in the former sense; and plainly mark the reason why they appropriated to themselves this honourable title. The former styles himself, ‘The Fellow Elder, and witness of the sufferings of Christ;’ at the same time exhorting those fellow Elders, to ‘feed the flock of God, &c,’

1 Pet. 5. 1, 2. So John names himself THE Elder, emphatically marking himself, as the only surviving apostle. 2 Epis. 1. 3 Epis. 1. with 1 Epis. 1. 1, 2, 3.

From among these early converts, who were the best qualified for office, the first ordinary office-bearers were chosen, for an evident reason, 1 Tim. 3. 6. In Acts 14. 23, we read, "and when they (the apostles) had ordained to them Elders in every church, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." It cannot be pretended with any reason, that by this language, or by Titus 1. 5, we are to understand, that the Apostles ordained men to be Elders; for this distinction, as has been shewn, was only obtained by age, and long standing in the profession of the gospel. And as the only office-bearers concerning whom directions are given, are Bishops and Deacons, (1 Tim. 3. 1—10. Tit. 1. 5—9. with Phil. 1. 1.) such, we are inclined to believe, Paul and Barnabas ordained from among the Elders at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch; as did Titus in the island of Cete. See Titus 1. 7, comp. with ver. 5.

That these early converts or elders, shared in the responsibility of directing and settling important matters in the church, is plain from Acts 11. 29, 30; and, that they were sometimes called to act even with the Apostles, see Acts 20. 2, 4, 6, 22, 23; with 16. 4. Under their care, Paul left the church at Ephesus, when departing from Miletus for Jerusalem. Acts 20. 17—38. From the 35 v. of which, it appears that these were not all Bishops; which, as well as Acts 11. 30. seems to furnish evidence that some of the Elders had to do with the temporal affairs of the churches. And if, as appears most probable, these are the persons mentioned ch. 11. 1. to whom the Apostle imparted the Holy Ghost, in token of which, they "spake with tongues and prophesied;" * their being called Elders, appears consistent with the

* GREVILLE EWING, on church-government, p. 32.

employment of this term in other places, namely, as denoting the "first fruits" and gifted brethren. See also James v. 14, 15.

And to such, it appears probable, the direction and instruction of the churches was, in most cases confided, till ordinary office-bearers were appointed. The instructions to Timothy, I Epis. 3. 1—10. and to Titus, 1. 5—9, were subsequent to the events recorded in the Acts, as the latter is a record of transactions from A. D. 33, to 63; whereas, the Epistles I Tim. and Titus, were not written before A. D. 64, or 65; according to Macknight. In these, the Apostle gave directions for the appointment of ordinary office-bearers, who should discharge the duties necessary for the prosperity of the church, after the extraordinary gifts should expire.

To such elders, altogether extraordinary in their gifts, if not in their duties also, the Apostle seems to refer in I Tim. v. 17. These, he directed the church to honour and support, distinguishing those among them, who "laboured in the word and teaching." But as they must, in the ordinary course of nature, leave the church to others, the Apostle had given directions for the choice of ordinary office-bearers, who should succeed them, when the extraordinary gifts should cease, and the circumstance of being among the first converts of Christ or his Apostles, could no longer give the distinction of elder.

[D]

As it may be interesting to know the sentiments entertained among the early settlers in America, on the great questions of civil and religious liberty, the following extract is given from a sermon preached from 2 Chron. 12. 12. before the first great and general assembly of the province of the Massachusetts-bay, after the two colonies at Massachuset and Plymouth were united by royal charter.

“Things will go well, when Magistrates are great promoters of the thing that good is, and of what the Lord requireth of them. I do not mean that it would be well for the civil Magistrate with a civil penalty to compel men to this or that way of worship, which they are conscientiously indisposed unto. He is most properly the officer of human society, and a christian by nonconformity to this or that imposed way of worship, does not break the terms on which he is to enjoy the benefits of human society. A man has a right unto his life, his estate, his liberty and his family, although he should not come up to these and those blessed institutions of our Lord. When a man sins in his political capacity, let political societies animadvert upon him; but when he sins only in a religious capacity, societies more purely religious, are the fittest then to deal with him. Indeed in the old testament, the magistrate was an ecclesiastical officer, and compliance with the Mosaic rites, was that which entitled men unto the benefits of Canaan, the typical and renowned land. But now, these figurative things have more spiritual things to answer them. It may be feared that things will not go well, when heresies are not exterminated; but I pray when (except once perhaps or so, in the case of Donatism) did fines or jails ever signify any thing for the cure of heretics? The primitive church, for the first 300 years of christianity, cut off a thousand new Hydra’s heads, without borrowing such penal laws as have since been used. It was by sound preaching, by discipline, by catechising, and by disputation, that they turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Then it was, that Christians did use to say, *Non gladiis aut jaculis, aut militari manu veritas prædicatur, sed suadendo et consulendo.*

“Afterwards, indeed, the orthodox engaged the emperors to severities, upon the heretics of those days; but what got they by it? When a wicked Manichee was put to death, an excellent historian says, “It was a most wretched example, and it made

the heresy spread the more." Such prosecutions, do but give a principle which would be most fatal to the church of God; yea, they do but afford a root for Cain's club to grow upon. These violences, may bring the erroneous to be hypocrites, but they will never make them to be believers: no, they naturally prejudice mens' minds against the cause, which is therein pretended for, as being a weak, a wrong, and evil cause. Wherefore that things may go well, I could willingly put in a bar against the persecution of any, that may conscientiously dissent from our way. Possibly the zeal in some famous and worthy disciples of our Lord among ourselves, has been reported and reckoned, as having once had a little too much fire on this account; but the churches of God abroad, counted that things did not go well among us, until they judged us more fully come up to the apostolic rule, To leave the otherwise-minded unto God. Nor would I desire myself, to suffer persecution upon a clearer cause, than that of testifying against our persecution of other christians, that are not of my own opinion. I am sure that things will not go well, as long as we incur the fulfilment of that awful word, "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Nevertheless, when things go well, there are magistrates, that will set themselves to advance all the truths and ways of God among their people. Magistrates are not only themselves to profess the truths, and practice the ways of God, but also to protect and favour all them that do the like. There is an aspect of singular kindness, defence, and support, which magistrates are to bear unto them that embrace; and much more unto them that declare the truths and ways of God. Things went well, when it could be said, as in 2 Chron. 30. 22. Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all them that taught the good knowledge of the Lord. Moreover, it belongs unto Magistrates, to punish all the vices which disturb the good order and repose of human society: and hence also, liberty of con-

science is not to be admitted as a cloak for liberty of profaneness. To live without any worship of God, or to blaspheme and revile his blessed name, is to be chastised as abominably criminal; for there can be no pretence of conscience thereunto. Things will go well, when we go thus, and when there is an accomplishment of that word in Rom. 13. 3. Rulers are not a terror to good works, but unto the evil." *

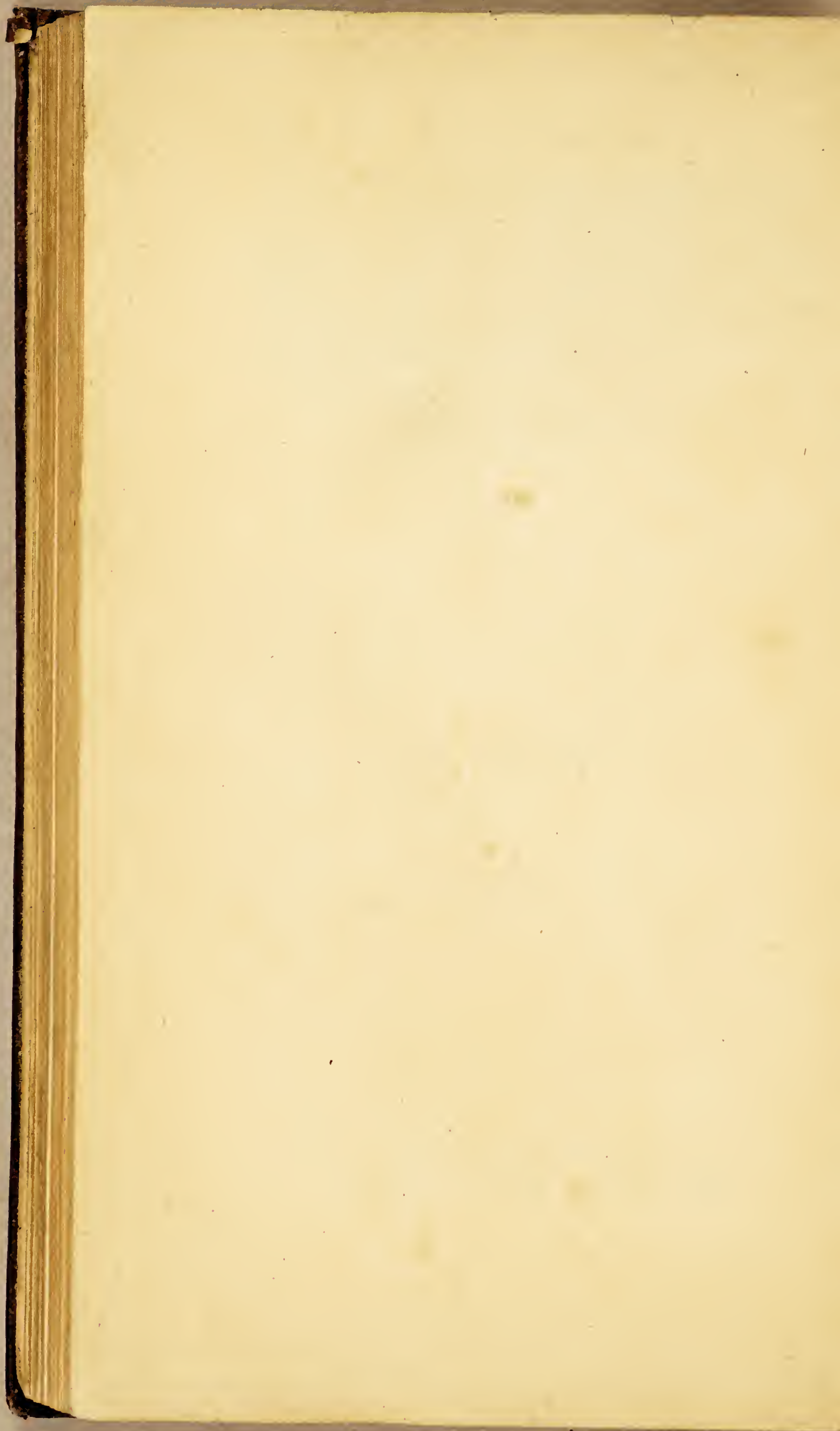
* Cotton Mather, Book 7. Page 29.

THE END.

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